AN EXAMINATION OF THE THOUGHT OF JOHN COLET (1467?-1519): A CATHOLIC HUMANIST REFORMER AT THE EVE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

In chapter 1 we show the importance of John Colet (1467?-1519) as a key transitional figure in the movement for Catholic humanist reform known as Erasmianism; and also the formation of the *via media* of Anglicanism. In chapter 2 we discuss the development of Oxford humanism during the fifteenth century and demonstrate the confusion regarding the meaning of Renaissance humanism in the secondary material regarding Colet. In chapter 3 we show that Colet's family background and early years in Oxford, Italy, and France were strongly influenced by the *studia humanitatis*. We trace Colet's intellectual relations with Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Lefèvre D'Etaples. In chapter 4 we show the influence of the *studia humanitatis* on Colet's *enarrationes* on the Pauline Epistles. In chapter 5 we give conclusive evidence for the importance of Colet's influence upon Erasmus. In chapter 6 we show the real nature of Colet's Platonism and the significance of the Pseudo-Dionysius for his thought. In chapter 7 we discuss in detail Colet's Convocation Sermon on ecclesiastical reformation. In chapter 8 we describe the papalist tradition of the *ecclesia Anglicana* in the later Middle Ages. We show that Colet believed that reformation should be led by the pope and bishops of the various parts of the Church, by means of a return to the canon law. Our detailed research on Colet demonstrates the great importance of Renaissance humanism and Erasmianism for a true understanding of the Catholic and Protestant Reformations (including the development of Luther's approach to exegesis), and the Anglican *via media*.

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ABBREVIATIONS

I. *Works of Colet*

Enarr. I Cor.	*Enarratio in Epistolam Primam S. Pauli ad Corinthios*, ed. J. H. Lupton
Enarr. Rom.	*Enarratio in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. J. H. Lupton
In Cel. Hier.	*Opus de Caelesti Dionysii hierarchia*
In Eccl. Hier	*In ecclesiasticam divi Dionisii hierarchiam*
Opusc.	*Opuscula quaedam theologica*, ed. J. H. Lupton
Script. ad Rom.	*Scripta Ioannis Colet, Professoris Theologiae, in Epistolam Divi Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. J. H. Lupton

II. *Secondary Works*

Erasmus

Allen	*Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod.

Journals

AHR	*American Historical Review*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
LCC	*Library of Christian Classics*
NAKG	*Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

My original approach to the study of the Biblical commentaries and other theological writings of John Colet was from the standpoint of an attempt to understand the nature ~~of his~~ celebrated Neoplatonism, and the relationship between his theological doctrine and Scriptural method and the Protestant Reformation.

In 1951 Professor Leland Miles wrote an article in the Anglican Theological Review in which he contrasted a "Protestant Colet" with a Catholic Thomas More. Then, in 1961, Miles published his book, John Colet and the Platonic Tradition, in which, although he modified somewhat his original view (also held in his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of North Carolina), he still maintained an essential similarity between Colet's Biblical theology and Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. He now contrasted what he considered to be "Protestant" with "Catholic" elements in Colet. The historical problems emerging from this approach were therefore: (1) had Colet anticipated Luther's apparently central doctrine of justification by faith alone? and (2) what was the effect of Colet's well-known Platonism upon his theology, since by 1520 Luther had violently rejected allowing Plato or any other "pagan philosopher" to influence Christian theology. Thirdly, in what sense, if any, was Miles justified in speaking about a "Protestant Colet," since Colet had died on September 16, 1519, ten years before the Diet of Speyer at which the term "Protestant" was first derived from the formal protestatio of the Diet's minority of Lutheran princes and more than a year before the final papal bull was published pronouncing Luther a heretic who was cut off from the Catholic Church. Colet's death also occurred a year before Luther's two celebrated Reformation treatises, An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation and Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, were written. The latter of these showed that Luther was breaking with the traditional doctrinal system which had grown up in the Western Church during ancient times and the Middle Ages.

Further investigation showed that there was a long tradition behind interpreting Colet as a "forerunner of the Reformation" of which Miles represented only the latest and most extreme example in actually terming him a "Protestant." It also became apparent that Miles had written his works without an adequate knowledge of the religious and intellectual history of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. For, if one comprehends properly the individual genius of Luther in his development of a new approach to Christianity during the second decade of the sixteenth century, it was impossible that Colet, whose major theological writings had been completed before 1517, should have been in any sense a "Protestant"; unless he had had very close relations with Luther and had agreed with certain cardinal and unusual points in his doctrine. This, however, was clearly not the case. At the most, Colet was, like his friend Erasmus, sympathetic toward Luther as a reformer of a Church which was clearly in desperate need of reform. But a close examination of Colet's writings showed only a superficial resemblance to Luther's theology, largely the result of the influence on both men of the New Testament (especially the Pauline Epistles), St. Augustine, and to a certain degree ideas from Wyclif and Lollard writings upon Colet's thought while certain of Luther's ideas were similar to those of Jan Hus. It became clear that there was in fact a general background of pious Northern humanism which had influenced both Colet and Luther to return _ad fontes_ to the Bible (especially St. Paul), and the Church Fathers, together with Erasmus, Lefèvre D'Étaples and many other Northern humanists. Moreover, on the basic questions of the doctrines of the Church and justification by faith, Colet differed considerably from Luther. His doctrine of justification by faith was not an imputed justification by faith alone (_sola fide_), but rather the Augustinian doctrine of infused and actual justification by faith which works through love (_the fides caritate formata_ of Thomas Aquinas and medieval theology). An examination was therefore necessary of both Colet's actual doctrine _vis-à-vis_ those of Luther and the Reformation, and also a critique of the traditional interpretations of Colet in order to find out the genesis of the idea of Colet as a "forerunner of the Reformation."

It became evident that in the Protestant tradition of scholarship since the sixteenth century it had often been assumed either implicitly or explicitly that leading attempts to reform the Church before 1517 had an intellectual connection with the doctrine of Luther and other leading Protestant reformers. The scholarship on Colet, like almost all Protestant scholarship until the twentieth century, saw the Catholic Reformation exclusively as Counter-Reformation and therefore assumed that late medieval reformatory ideas and Biblical scholarship had a necessary intellectual connection with the Protestant Reformation which was to come. Heiko Oberman has recently re-examined this view of Church history by showing that there was long a general tendency to make an over-simple distinction in late medieval theologians between those who stressed Scripture as over against tradition (who were termed "forerunners of the Reformation"), and those who stressed the tradition of the Church as a source of ecclesiastical authority (who were seen as "forerunners" of the Council of Trent and post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism). The large number of intermediary positions were ignored. Those who stressed the papal and hierarchical authority of the Church and the Canon Law were treated as though they were all high papalists or curialists of the type of Aegidius Romanus or Augustinus Triumphus; while those writers who stressed the ancient tradition of Scripture or *sacra pagina* as the single and supreme source of both authority and tradition in the Church were all treated as "forerunners of the Reformation." This simplistic distinction and the accompanying historical tendency to read all late medieval theologians as though they were precursors of either the Protestant Reformation or the Council of Trent (for the decisions of Trent were often made in conscious reaction to the rise of Protestantism) made it extremely difficult to do justice to the thought of a late medieval humanistically-inclined reformer like Colet. The polemical categories developed in the sixteenth century had influenced almost the entire tradition of Colet scholarship. This was also the case in varying degrees with the major work on Colet done in the nineteenth century by Frederic Seebohm and Joseph Hirst Lupton.

Both men were influenced by the Protestant tradition of the nineteenth-century Church of England and were eager to see in both Colet and Erasmus forerunners of nineteenth-century liberal Protestant scholarship. Seebohm went much further in this direction than Lupton. His book, The Oxford Reformers, first published in 1867, was also more influential than were Lupton's Introductions to his editions of Colet's works and his Life of Colet (1887) in forming the general opinion still prevalent in Colet interpretation.

Twentieth-century writers have tended for the most part to depend upon Seebohm and Lupton, either positively or negatively, rather than to return to Colet's Latin. Therefore, much uncritical reliance has been placed upon Lupton's translations of Colet. Although these translations are for the most part faithful to Colet's thought, Lupton, as we have seen, still stood in the earlier tradition explicitly stated in Samuel Knight's Life of Colet (1724), whereby Colet was first and foremost a "forerunner" of the later Protestant Reformation. Lupton's bias is shown by the fact that he consistently translated Colet's numerous citations from the Vulgate with the translations from the Greek in the Authorized Version of the Bible. In 1893 he published his B.D. dissertation for Cambridge University entitled "The Influence of Dean Colet upon the Reformation of the English Church," in which he attempted once again to substantiate the view that Colet was a "forerunner of the Reformation." But we found that for the most part Lupton's scholarship on Colet remains the most substantial there is. Although Lupton needs correction at various points, the twentieth-century Colet scholarship has not been of so high a standard. But, given Lupton's presuppositions, it is not surprising that he failed to make a proper assessment of Colet as a Catholic reformer or to understand that the roots of the Catholic Reformation of the sixteenth century lie in the fifteenth century and earlier, and precede the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

The contributions of the twentieth-century writers to Colet scholarship have for the most part been in the form of articles rather than books, with the exception of the book on Colet's Platonism by Leland Miles and Sears Jayne's John Colet and Marsilio Ficino of 1963. It is significant that almost none of these recent interpreters of Colet appear to have the necessary background in the historical, religious, and social developments of the later Middle Ages and the Reformation which is necessary for a proper estimation of his thought. Among the few writers who have fully understood the essentially Catholic nature of the Christian humanist movement of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, we can name George V. Jourdan, The Movement Toward Catholic Reform in the Early XVI Century (1914), James K. McConica, English Humanism and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI, and those works which examine the origins of the Catholic Reformation, such as Pierre Janelle's Catholic Reformation and Hubert Jedin's History of the Council of Trent. The early chapters of Jedin's book deal with the background of Catholic reform from the Council of Vienne until the Fifth Lateran Council and the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation.

The one-sidedness of most of the articles on Colet in the learned journals seems in large part the result of the increasing specialization of twentieth-century scholarship. For Colet was both a medieval and a Renaissance man whose learning was both very broad and synthesized in such a way that it is practically impossible to do justice to particular parts of it abstracted from the whole. Colet's humanistic interests in history, rhetoric, Canon Law, and Platonist philosophy and theology and his concern for the primary sources go far toward explaining the originality of his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles; while his use of humanism, his Biblical hermeneutics, preaching, the refounding of St. Paul's School, and his view of the relation between Church and State are all parts of the same whole and spring from his basic desire to help bring about the necessary and long awaited reformation, both intellectual and moral, of the Catholic Church. Colet's Platonism, like that of Marsilio Ficino of Florence by which he was strongly influenced, is the product of far too complex a tradition to be termed simply "Neoplatonist," as has been the case with commentators from Frederick Seebohm down to Sears Jayne. However, it is also true that the dominant Platonic influence on Colet's extant works is the Neoplatonist Greek Father Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, whom Colet like Ficino, Lefèvre D'Étaples, and the entire Middle Ages, believed was the convert and disciple of St. Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34. Since the early twentieth century it has been clear that this writer was almost certainly a late fifth or early sixth century Christian disciple of Proclus, the last great teacher of the Neo-Platonist school. But although the Pseudo-Dionysius was strongly influenced by the Neo-Platonist philosophy of Proclus, he was nevertheless a Christian theologian who, like most of the great Greek Fathers, synthesized Christian theology with Platonist philosophy in a Christianized form of traditional Greek paideia. The Pseudo-Dionysius was in fact an extreme example of a tradition which is also represented by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, as well as by Augustine. Although it may seem extraordinary today that Western scholars from Gregory the Great until Nicholas of Cusa and Lorenzo Valla believed that the author of the corpus Dionysiacum was the disciple of St. Paul and that his theology reflected his master's thought, we must remember that St. Paul's own spiritual theology was influenced by Greek thought including Platonism; and that the Church Fathers and medieval doctores ecclesiae, including so Aristotelian a writer as Thomas Aquinas, all incorporated in their theology elements of a Platonic thought which was never specifically attacked as an influence on Christian theology until the time of Luther. Indeed, defenders of the authenticity of the Pseudo-Dionysius could be found down until the nineteenth century; while during the sixteenth century the question of his authenticity as the patristic basis for the Roman Catholic doctrine of the ecclesiastical hierarchy became an important point of polemical discussion between Catholics and Protestants. As Marsilio Ficino, himself a priest, pointed out in a letter to his friend Martin Prenniger, Chancellor to the Bishop of Constance, the Latin Platonic tradition to be found in the works of

Cicero, Apuleius, Aulus Gellius, Chalcidius, Augustine, the Latin Pseudo-Dionysius, and Boethius had made Platonism available to the Latin theologians in an unbroken tradition from classical and patristic times until the new humanist translations of Plato from the Greek by Ficino himself during the fifteenth century. In such a cultural and theological tradition the authority of this pseudonymous author who has been called "the most Latin of the Greek Fathers," and who was after the ninth century identified with St. Denis, the patron saint of France, and upheld with vigor by the University of Paris, is not so strange as might first appear. In fact it was largely owing to the influence of Augustine and Dionysius that a predominantly Neo-Platonic tradition in theology never died out in the West from late ancient times until the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Having found that there was no substance to Miles' identification of the Platonic and a supposedly "proto-Protestant" aspect of Colet's thought, our study of the problem of the real nature of Colet's thought and development led to a close examination of the divergent interpretations in the secondary sources. Consequently it was next necessary to make a close analysis of the true nature of Renaissance humanism and its influence in England in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of leading interpretations of Colet. We found that the writings of Albert Hyma on Erasmus and Colet, like those of Leland Miles, make far too much of the superficial similarity between Luther's lectures on Romans of 1515-16 and Colet's two commentaries on this same Pauline Epistle, without noticing the wide differences between these two nearly contemporary thinkers, both of whom were so strongly influenced by the thought of St. Paul. We found that the return to Paul, the leading epistolary writer of the Bible, was a characteristic of the pious Northern humanism of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; for, as Lucien Febvre has written, "each true and passionate Christian of that age thought he himself had discovered [the spirituality of St. Paul] and carried it firmly closed in his heart like a private treasure and his source of ardour and generous life."[1] This was the "private treasure" upon which Ficino lectured at the end of his life at the cathedral at Florence, and to communicate which Colet lectured publicly and received so large and devoted a following at Oxford between c. 1496 and c. 1503. St. Paul was also the inspiration of Jean Vitrier, the Warden of the Franciscans at St. Omer whom Erasmus met in 1501 and coupled with Colet in a double biography in his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521. St. Paul was also the first Biblical writer to whom Erasmus turned himself under the tutelage of Colet and later Vitrier, and of Lefèvre D'Étaples and his circle at Paris and Meaux. It was not surprising, then, that at this period St. Paul also became the guiding light for Luther. What was all important in the Reformation controversy was the use of the theology of Paul. Colet's interpretation of St. Paul is patristic, Catholic, and, under the influence of Dionysius, spiritualizing, as is his view of the nature of the Church.

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[1] L. Febvre, _Autour de l'Heptaméron, Amour sacré, amour profane_, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1944), p. 53; E. F. Rice, _The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom_ (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 124.

In Chapter 2 we have investigated the origins of humanism in England during the fifteenth century. Our findings show that English humanism during this century developed primarily at Oxford among the university-educated clergy and through visitors to and from Italy. This humanism developed for the most part among Oxford-educated scholastic clerics who were mostly students of theology and Canon Law, the dominant faculties at Oxford during the fifteenth century. We investigated this Oxford humanism in order to determine whether or not Colet can properly be called a humanist; since this had been called into doubt by Eugene F. Rice. After an analysis of the meaning of humanism in the Renaissance sense, we found that Colet was indeed strongly influenced by humanism, and that he used the methods of humanism in order to understand the Bible and to prepare himself for a career of preaching in the English Church. In both ancient and medieval theology biblical hermeneutics had always been closely associated with preaching. We argue that Colet's famous lectures at Oxford on the Pauline Epistles were part of this preparation for a career of preaching. Colet used the methods of humanism, learnt in both Oxford and abroad,in his fresh approach to St. Paul,as a way of pressing the dominant cultural movement of the time into the service of the Church.

In the course of this investigation we found that the problem of correctly interpreting Colet is closely connected with that of interpreting the goals and ideals of Erasmus. Firstly, Erasmus wrote the only contemporary biography of Colet, the validity of which has been recently challenged by Eugene F. Rice. The basic truth or falsehood of this account of the life of Colet by Erasmus had therefore to be decided for a proper assessment of Colet's theology and ideas of ecclesiastical reform. It also became clear that it was largely through his influence on Erasmus that Colet had his indirect influence on the Protestant Reformation, and it was in this sense only that he could be termed its "forerunner." The principal obstacle to arriving at a correct interpretation of Erasmus was the bias against him in both Protestant and Catholic scholarship. The Protestant tradition has often viewed Erasmus as a reformer who basically agreed with Luther's ideas of Church reform but who dared not make public his real views because of his desire not to be a martyr. It was implied by German reformers during his own day that this was the reason that he would not support Luther. The taunts of Ulrich von Hutten and Luther that Erasmus did not have the guts to join the movement of the Protestant Reformation have often been accepted uncritically at their face value, forgetting the highly polemical context in which they were made. In fact, it is not too much to say that Luther's own view of Erasmus has been retained by much of Protestant scholarship. On the other hand, Roman Catholic scholarship on Erasmus until recently has also tended to accept at face value the taunt of some of Erasmus' Catholic contemporaries that he "laid the egg which Luther hatched." There is a modicum of truth in this charge, but it should be clearly understood that although Erasmus' satires on the Church and _Novum Instrumentum_ influenced Luther and although Erasmus did support Luther's struggle for Church reform until late 1520 or early 1521. Erasmus was never in sympathy with the more radical aspects of Luther's reformatory program, such as those expressed in the _De captivitate Babylonica_ of 1520.

The misunderstanding on this score appears to derive in part from the ambiguous attitude toward Luther of Erasmus himself. His letters make quite clear that he always admired Luther's courageous reformatory attack on notorious ecclesiastical abuses, while at the same time he disagreed with those aspects of his thought which went against a purified Catholic doctrine. But it is also to be attributed to an ambiguous attitude toward Erasmus by Luther, who as early as 1516 had written Spalatin that he disagreed with the basic approach to theology of Erasmus, and yet as late as 1522 was still expecting Erasmus' support for his revolutionary religious program. The letters to Erasmus of Luther and Hutten have given the impression that Erasmus could have been expected to support Luther's entire program as it had been unfolded in 1521; while from 1518 on Erasmus' letters show that he was hoping that Luther would tone down his attacks upon the existing structure of the Church and show himself to be a humanist Catholic reformer of the type of himself and Colet. This is especially evident in Erasmus' letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521, which contains his biography of Colet as well as that of Jehan Vitrier. Before this, on May 10, 1521, Erasmus had already written a long letter to Jonas, an Erfurt humanist admirer of Erasmus, explaining why he believed Jonas should not continue to support Luther. This approach had failed and by June 1521, Jonas, who had already accompanied Luther to the Diet of Worms, had left Erfurt for Wittenberg. This later letter, which includes the final form of what is far and away the most important contemporary Life of Colet upon which Erasmus had been working since he first heard of the Dean's death in October 1519, was in fact yet another unsuccessful attempt to prevent

Jonas from going over completely into the Lutheran camp. In this letter which was intended for the whole humanist world Erasmus presents Jonas with biographies of two men whom he believed to have been genuine saints and Catholic reformers in accordance with the primitive ideals of the Church and the Pauline theology. When the letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521 is read together with that of May 10, it is clear that Erasmus is presenting to Jonas the examples of Vitrier and Colet as his ideal of true Christian reformers, rather than Luther, the criticism of whom had been made clear in the earlier letter of May 10. Erasmus' view on these matters is in fact perfectly consistent with the views on theology and Church reform which he held before he first heard of Luther in 1515. Erasmus, like his friends Colet and Thomas More, was an idealist, and he continued to hope that Luther would mute the extremism of his views and language and prove to be the kind of Catholic reformer that he had originally hoped. He also hoped that the growing schism from the Church in Germany could be headed off before it became irreparably broad. This was the real reason why Erasmus refused to write against Luther until 1524 and then made a point of choosing for attack an aspect of Luther's doctrine with which he had always been unquestionably in disagreement -- the question of the freedom or bondage in sin and grace of the human will.

Furthermore, since Erasmus himself was certainly guilty at times of certain minor falsehoods, there has been a tendency which continues in the most recent scholarship to disbelieve any of his statements which do not fit in with the scholar's own preconceptions. We found, then, that both sides of the polemical historiography of sixteenth-century controversy have assumed that Erasmus was secretly in sympathy with developed Lutheranism; but that he lacked the courage and honesty to say so, his specific statements to the contrary being dismissed as dishonest. This has had most important consequences for the correct understanding of Colet; because the letters of Erasmus, above all the biographical letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521, are of such great importance for understanding Colet properly. It was thus necessary to show the general accuracy of Erasmus' biography of Colet as opposed to the view of Eugene F. Rice that it portrays a "'liberal' theologian and humanist created by Erasmus" in order to make a correct assessment of Colet's thought.

Thus the problem of the correct interpretation of Erasmus in relation to both Luther and the Catholic Church has had very important consequences for the study of Colet. For although the final form which Erasmus' Life of Colet took was probably influenced to a certain degree by Erasmus' attempted apologetic use of it on Jonas; nevertheless, with the possible exception of Erasmus' ambiguous statement concerning Colet's attitude to St. Augustine, we find that there is no reason to discount the biography as a substantially accurate account which both agrees with and throws light on all the other evidence which survives concerning Colet, above all that in his own writings. This is a matter of great importance because almost all later work on Colet, even that which has been critical of Erasmus, depends on this biography. Although this first Life of Colet is comparatively short, it is also remarkably compact and full of information, and requires to be examined carefully in Erasmus' original Latin. It is invaluable for understanding the life and thought of Colet. Through our comparison of the facts stated by Erasmus in his letter to Jonas with Colet's own works and the correspondence of Erasmus edited by P. S. Allen and others in the Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami, we find that, with the exception of the curious statement that there was no Church Father to whom Colet was more unfair than to Augustine (which goes against the evidence of Colet's own extant writings), there is no substance whatever for Eugene F. Rice's view that Erasmus created an unreliable portrait of Colet in his own Erasmian image. In actual fact the "Erasmianism" of Colet, as we will show, derives from the influence which he, along with Vitrier and others, had upon the development of Erasmus' thought or "Erasmianism." This is clearly stated by Erasmus himself in his correspondence, as well as in a letter which was written to Colet in 1519 by Marquard von Hattstein, a Canon of Mainz Cathedral.

Since it has been known since the appearance of Lupton's work that Colet was influenced to some degree by the thought of both Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola and also that he stood in some sense in the Platonic tradition of philosophy and theology, we have reconstructed Colet's interest in Platonism so far as this can be determined from his surviving works. The problem was to judge the causes and extent of the influence of Platonism upon Colet's theology. This study necessarily involved the wider question of Colet's place in the movement of Renaissance humanism, especially since there was disagreement in the secondary material as to whether Colet should or should not be termed a "humanist." It was necessary to define precisely what is meant by Renaissance humanism, since the term was being used differently by different writers, before we could decide whether or not Colet had been significantly influenced by it. We found in fact that the continued confusion of the terminology of contemporary scholarship on Renaissance humanism and its influence on fifteenth and sixteenth century theology derives to a large degree from a semantic confusion between humanism in the Renaissance sense of the cultural influence of the studia humanitatis, and the much later meaning of humanism as the sense of philosophic atheism which places the stress on man because it does not accept the being of God. In his article "John Colet and the Annihilation of the Natural" Eugene Rice has accepted this latter sense uncritically in maintaining that Colet could not be properly called a humanist. It was because he also argued that Erasmus clearly was a humanist that for him the "Erasmian" humanist Colet of the letter to Jonas was necessarily unhistorical and a creation of Erasmus' tendentious imagination. It was therefore necessary to trace the origins of Renaissance humanism and its development in England until the time of Colet, and then to decide whether Colet and Erasmus can with accuracy be termed "Christian humanists," and, if so, what this term means. We found that Renaissance humanism, despite its complexity and variety, could be given a reasonably precise definition as the return to an ideal of culture and education, the studia humanitatis, which was outlined by classical and later ancient Roman writers, notably by Cicero in his De Oratore. It referred to a specific *curriculum* of study which included grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. The influence of these studies, modelled on the classical Roman authors, had become well established in the Italian universities by the *Quattrocento*, and had begun to be extended beyond the Arts faculties to those of philosophy, theology, canon and civil law, and medicine. Our examination of the development of this humanism in England during the fifteenth century showed that it was in fact among the clerical schoolmen, especially those at Oxford who had been trained in the still dominant faculties of Theology and Canon Law, that Italian humanism first began to take effect in a gradual development during the course of the fifteenth century. The English humanism of this period was both clerical and pragmatic. The papal chancery had been filled with leading Italian humanists since the first years of the *Quattrocento*, and the papacy through the international correspondence and the continued cultural supremacy of the Church, in this way set the Latin style for the chanceries of princes and prelates throughout Western Europe. It is clear that by the second half of the fifteenth century a knowledge of the *literae humaniores* and the classical Latin style which they taught had become a key to the advancement of English clergy in the royal service and thus in a Church which was to all intents and purposes dominated by the Crown. For this reason many English clerics who had received the traditional training of a declining scholasticism travelled to Italy (the center of both European culture and the Church) to gain further education in the more humane studies which would be valuable for their careers. Humanism was in fact introduced into the English universities by the schoolmen themselves: the clash between humanism and scholasticism would not begin in earnest until the early years of the sixteenth century, when it was realized that the new approach would undermine the scholastic method and even traditional Catholic doctrine. But until the last decade of the fifteenth century humanism existed in the English universities as an extra-curricular interest among the schoolmen themselves. This alone can explain the enthusiastic response which Colet's lectures at Oxford on the Pauline Epistles received after his return from Italy, and the eagerness with which (as Erasmus witnessed in 1499) the leading dignitaries of the University including the doctors of theology and both canon and civil law listened to the lectures on the Pauline Epistles of a young man who had gained no degree beyond the M.A. and was lecturing in contravention of the official University Statutes. We will show that in his Pauline commentaries Colet was indeed influenced by certain aspects of Italian humanism and it was this influence which accounts for the novel aspects of his Oxford lectures, although they were by no means as revolutionary as Sears Jayne has recently maintained. Colet appears to have followed Ficino in using the humanist historical method of a return to the primary sources of primitive Christianity in a conscious reaction to the dialectical method of scholasticism, which he almost totally rejected as a suitable approach to the Bible. We argue that the phrase "Christian humanism", although somewhat ambiguous can be used with regard to Colet if it is understood to mean the use of humanistic studies to reconstitute the study of theology which had by the late fifteenth century drifted away from its source, by means of a return ad fontes to the Bible and its patristic interpreters. Such a sacred humanism, which was combined with classical humanism in Erasmus, had been previously developed by Colet who throughout his career was influenced by both the Latin style and the ideas of Cicero. However in Colet's case, as opposed to that of Erasmus, this theological humanism eventually took the form of an almost exclusive interest in re-establishing the Christian sources: humanism was to be used entirely in the service of theology and preaching. It was the manner of Colet's "single-minded" use of humanism in the service of the re-establishment of "the old and true theology" which caused him to play such an important role in the intellectual development of Erasmus. For Erasmus, who had already developed an intense interest in the classical humanities (especially poetry) during his years in the Augustinian monastery at Steyn, and who already wrote Thomas Grey that he was a vetus theologus while he was studying Scotism at Paris in 1497, found Colet when he met him two years later a man who set him an example of both a dedication to the use of humane learning and methods for the revival of Biblical theology, and also the moral determination to put this program into action even though it inevitably meant a clash with the scholastic traditionalists. Erasmus would in fact carry much further the task in which he found Colet already engaged when he first met him at Oxford in 1499. He had a much clearer understanding than Colet of the necessity of a knowledge of Greek, as well as Latin, for a genuine return to the New Testament and the whole patristic tradition; although it must be said for Colet that he gave himself up to regular preaching and his Cathedral duties after about 1504, whereas Erasmus gave as much time as possible to the life of scholarship. But Erasmus' mastery of Greek and his greater philological abilities would take him much further than Colet in the task of making the fullest possible return through scholarship to the source of theology in the Bible and its early interpreters, the Fathers of the Church. Nevertheless Erasmus himself states more than once his debt to Colet in deciding the direction of the great work of his life. We treat in detail this relation between Colet and Erasmus after 1499 in Chapter 5.

Since recent interpreters of Colet continue to follow Frederic Seebohm in stating that his method of Biblical interpretation was revolutionary, we made a study of the relation of Colet's hermeneutical method to patristic and medieval exegesis. We have traced the origins of the patristic and medieval distinction between the literal or historical and the spiritual, allegorical or mystical sense of the Bible to the New Testament itself. We found that the allegorization of the Bible (the Old Testament) was used by St. Paul himself in his treatment of Genesis in Galatians 4:21-31. Typological and allegorical exegesis were already confused in pre-Christian Judaism and this confusion was developed by Philo Judaeus and through Philo in the exegesis of the Alexandrian Christian Fathers, especially Origen, the real founder of the medieval exegetical tradition. It was from Origen that a fourfold method of exegesis of a literal and three spiritual meanings of Scripture passed on to the Western tradition in the form classically described for the Middle Ages in the Conlationes of St. John Cassian, according to whom the three types of spiritual meaning of the Bible are the allegorical (in the narrow sense), the tropological or moral, and the anagogical or eschatological. However, until the later Middle Ages it was always recognized by medieval exegesis that these four meanings are never contradictory to one another; because they are the Word of God for the world though on different planes. The spiritual senses all derive from the one Holy Spirit who inspires the whole of the canonical Scriptures. However, by the later Middle Ages, in large part because of the separation of scholastic theology from biblical studies, these senses began to be given divergent meanings and to contradict one another. Colet continued to distinguish between the literal and spiritual senses in the patristic fashion which is still upheld by such modern Roman Catholics as Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac. It was the influence of Renaissance Neoplatonism and humanism which caused him to emphasize the complete unity of the Holy Spirit's spiritual or mystical meaning of Scripture with the literal meaning. Thus Colet does not reject the traditional medieval fourfold interpretation of Scripture, but in his hermeneutic chooses to distinguish only between a single spiritual and literal sense in those parts of Scripture where the literal sense does not upbuild the Church (a distinction which had been made by Augustine). Like many previous interpreters of the earlier Middle Ages, Colet maintains that in the New Testament (including of course the Pauline Epistles), the literal and the spiritual meanings of Scripture are the same, except where the language is clearly figurative, as in the Gospel parables and throughout the Apocalypse. The influence of humanism was thus to cause Colet to return to the patristic tradition of exegesis, with the difference of an emphasis upon the historical context and classical Roman background of the Pauline Epistles which is clearly indebted to humanist historiography. The effect of Neoplatonism, the study of the Latin Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius, was to give a heavy stress upon the oneness of God the Holy Spirit as the divine author and inspirer of the Scriptures. The discovery of his spiritual or divine meaning is the end of all Biblical hermeneutics. In most of the New Testament, however, this spiritual or mystical meaning of the *Deus absconditus* is the same as the literal or historical meaning of the human biblical author.

Furthermore, the threefold mystical way of the Pseudo-Dionysius to Christian perfection through purification, illumination, and deification is the dominant theological *motif* through the writings of Colet after the Oxford *Enarratio* on *Romans*, in which this *motif* can already be seen developing. We argue that the *Enarratio* on *Romans* is not only Colet's earliest theological work, but also in fact the first of the series of lectures on the entire Renaissance canon of the Pauline Epistles which Erasmus tells us Colet delivered at Oxford before he left for London to become Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. The threefold mystical way of Dionysius is basic to all of Colet's theological writings with the exception of his *Expositio literalis* of *Romans* chapters I and V. These writings include Colet's *Enarratio* on *I Corinthians*, his commentaries on the *Celestial* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies* of Dionysius, and the *De sacramentis ecclesiae* in which he attempts to reconcile the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church with the Dionysian view of the sacraments as the material symbols of the threefold mystical way to deification of the perfected Christian. We also see that the doctrine of the freedom of the human will and the human power to cooperate with God's prevenient grace is as basic to the theology of Colet as it is to Dionysius, Augustine, and the rest of the Fathers, and that in this regard there is a complete difference between his theology and that of Luther. Seebohm's failure to understand this is a major source of his failure to understand the influence of Augustine on Colet's theology; although he was also misled by the ambiguous statement of Erasmus concerning Colet and Augustine. We find that Colet follows Augustinian doctrine but adjusts it to the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, whom in his extant writings he always assumes to have been the disciple of St. Paul, and an apostolicus whose ancient authority is only just inferior to that of the original Apostles. Furthermore, he believed that the writings of the Pseudo-Areopagite were the written form of a secret or mystical tradition which was delivered orally by Christ to the Apostles and which describes institutions of the apostolic Church not mentioned in the canonical Scriptures. Colet believed that the writings of Dionysius form a Christian mystical or spiritual tradition which is the equivalent of the Jewish Cabala. Since Colet used an analogy from the Celestial Hierarchy in his sermon on the occasion of Thomas Wolsey's receiving the red hat of the cardinalate on November 18, 1515, and also recommends the threefold Dionysian way through purification and illumination to perfection in a letter to Erasmus written in about June 1517, Seebohm, Lupton, and Jayne are wrong in maintaining that by 1501 Colet had rejected the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius as spurious. The Platonism in Colet's writings proves in fact to be for the most part the Neoplatonism of the Pseudo-Dionysius, the supposed disciple of Colet's favorite Apostle, St. Paul. The Neo-platonist Christian theology of Dionysius is made by Colet to agree with the dominant Platonism of the other Church Fathers. We intend in later research to study the influences of the Latin Origen, Jerome, and Cyprian on the thought of Colet.

After treating Colet's relations with Erasmus in Chapter 5, in chapters 6 and 7 we discuss Colet's practical program for the reformation of the early sixteenth-century English Church as presented in his famous sermon to the clergy of the Southern Province of Canterbury at the opening of Convocation on February 6, 1511/1512. We have made a close analysis of this sermon, the only one of Colet's which has survived _in toto_. The context for understanding this sermon must be the development of ideas of Catholic reform between the effective collapse of the Conciliar Movement at the Council of Basel in 1449, and the Fifth Lateran Council which had already been convoked by the time that it was preached. By an analysis of Colet's reformatory ideas in this Convocation Sermon together with statements in his other writings, we find that Colet's view of ecclesiastical reform stood midway between the extreme papalist and conciliarist positions. He believed, following the dictum laid down by Guillaume Durandus the Younger in his _De modo concilii generalis celebrandi_ to the Council of Vienne in 1312, that reformation should begin at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and thence spread downwards through the members. Colet follows the Latin Dionysius in calling all the bishops pontiffs and heads of the Church, while the pope is the *summus pontifex* or highest bishop. He held that in the apostolic Church all priests were equal because they all performed the sacrifice of the Mass and made the Lord's Body; but that shortly after the Apostolic Age, the Catholic Church delegated a superior *legal* authority to the bishops for the adjudication of ecclesiastical disputes. Soon after this a centralized legal authority was conferred on one highest bishop "whom we are accustomed to call the pope," also in order to quell disputes. Colet argues in the Convocation Sermon that the bishops as heads of the Church must begin the reformation by reforming their own lives and must set a proper example to the lower clergy and the laity. They should also convoke frequent general, provincial, and diocesan councils. Colet thus stands in a recognizable tradition of early sixteenth-century Catholic reform which supported the papal and episcopal leadership for the bringing about of frequent councils for the desperately needed reform of the Church. This papalist and episcopalist conciliarism supported the decree *Frequens*, but not *Sacrosancta*, of the Council of Constance. The reformation which Colet proposed was to be carried out by a return of the English Church under episcopal leadership to a genuine obedience to the statutes of the Canon Law in accordance with the proper order and structure of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In a concluding chapter we argue that Colet's passionate desire for the reform of the Catholic Church through a general imitation of the pattern set by the incarnate Christ is the constant factor which draws all the aspects of his thought and endeavor together. We assess the influence of Colet as a worker for reform on the eve of the Continental Reformation. We find that Colet's courageous, outspoken, but idealistic call for reformation in the Convocation Sermon of 1511/1512 was doomed to failure, once the nature of the episcopacy of the early sixteenth-century *ecclesia Anglicana* is considered. The bishops of the English Church during this period were largely royal servants, a tradition which had developed during the Middle Ages. An important and unfortunate effect of the weakening of the papacy during the Great Schism, and period of the Conciliar movement, was the almost complete collapse of the traditional support that it had given the Churches in the various parts of Christendom as opposed to the secular authority. The developing nationalism in England in the later Middle Ages led also to an increasing nationalism of the *ecclesia Anglicana*. During the fifteenth century, as the popes withdrew more and more into Italian politics, England withdrew from Continental affairs after her defeat in the last phases of her long medieval struggle with France. Meanwhile the English Crown had gained almost complete control over the bishoprics of the Church, while the common lawyers were successfully widening the jurisdiction of the Great Statute of *Praemunire* at the expense of the traditional ecclesiastical authority. The very real threat to that authority of the more extreme views of Wyclif and the Lollard movement had so frightened the clergy that they had reacted by a rigid orthodoxy and repression of the laity in the ecclesiastical courts, at a time when an increasingly better-educated laity was in any case chafing under the traditional ecclesiastical dominance over many aspects of their lives. The result was a widespread anti-clericalism among laymen by the early sixteenth century which was in the last analysis only held in check by the Crown. The English Kings, however, were traditionally papalist so long as the popes made sure that their interests were considered. It is questionable whether Colet was correct when he told the prelates of the Canterbury Convocation that if they would only reform themselves in accordance with the ancient rules of the Canon Law they would have no further difficulty with lay anti-clericalism. The fact appears to be that the kind of bishops who were for the most part provided by the papacy to their sees at the request of the Crown by the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII were not likely to reform themselves by giving up their secular way of living as Colet desired. The notorious Hunne Affair, which is now known to have started in 1512 very shortly after Colet's Convocation Sermon, did, however, show conclusively the truth of what he had preached. Hunne's evident murder in the Bishop of London's prison caused an outburst of anti-clericalism by the House of Commons in the Parliament of 1515-1516. This bitter antagonism had to be patched over by Henry VIII himself at the request of Cardinal Wolsey as his Lord Chancellor. But Wolsey failed to bring about ecclesiastical reformation; though his extraordinary powers as papal legatus de latere were granted specifically for this purpose in 1518. His extreme worldliness and his high-handedness as almost vice-pope for England and supreme minster of the King in the State meant that on his fall in 1529 the stage was set for Henry VIII, with the aid of Thomas Cromwell, to force the submission of the unpopular clergy and break the authority of the papacy in England. The devastating finality of Wolsey's fall in 1529 after the failure of his pro-French policy and his consequent failure to gain from Clement VIII the annulment which he had promised of Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon, and his meek admission of the royal charge that his legatine rule had transgressed the statute of Praemunire, showed how completely the English Church by the early sixteenth century was under the power of the King, however much Colet deplored the fact. Colet hoped for a reform in accordance with the ideals of the earlier medieval Church, whereas the relations between sacerdotium and regnum had by the beginning of the sixteenth century changed drastically throughout Europe in favor of the national State. Because of the humiliations of the defeat by France and the civil chaos of the Wars of the Roses, the English State appeared deceptively weak during most of the fifteenth century; but in fact the nation had been growing in strength during this time and the foundations were being laid for its growing importance in Christendom under the Tudors. Colet's medieval and Dionysian ideal of a reformed priesthood which would control the laity including the King was in fact long out of date by the time that he preached the Convocation Sermon. However, it is no doubt true that the reform of the clergy which Colet preached would also have allayed the rising anticlericalism which helped Henry VIII with the aid of Thomas Cromwell to gain statutory assistance from the Reformation Parliament for the breach with Rome. It seems to have been Cromwell who developed during the course of this long Parliament the modern political theory of the omnicompetent State and much of the policy whereby the ecclesia Anglicana was divorced from the papal authority. Nevertheless, this policy was only carried out because the King desired it; and in 1540, after his usefulness to the King was over, Cromwell was executed at Henry's command.

We conclude our study of Colet's place in the religious history of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance by emphasizing the fact that the via media between Rome and Protestantism, which by the reign of Elizabeth I had come to characterize the Church of England, was built on the foundations of the Erasmian solution to the Reformation problem. This maintained the necessity of belief in certain dogmatic essentials which all Christians could hold, as contrasted with the adiaphora or "things indifferent." This Erasmian via media can be traced back to the spiritualizing view of dogma which Erasmus shared with Colet. Characteristic of the Anglican via media also was Colet's respect for ecclesiastical tradition which is, however, for him never a separate source of authority, but must always be based on Scripture. We see demonstrated here the definite, if largely indirect, influence of Colet upon the development of Anglicanism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Powel Mills Dawley has written, "the line of spiritual continuity is clear -- from Colet to Cranmer to Jewel to Hooker, and then to the Caroline divines."[2]

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[2] P. M. Dawley, John Whitgift and the English Reformation (New York: Scribner's, 1954), p. 194.

Chapter Two

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANISM IN ENGLAND UNTIL THE TIME OF COLET *

The Meaning of Renaissance Humanism

A major source of misunderstanding in the interpretation of Colet arises from a failure to understand the true nature of Renaissance humanism, and its influence in England during the fifteenth century. The German word humanismus, from which the English "humanism" derives, does not appear to have been coined until 1808 by the German educator F. J. Niethammer, in order to express the emphasis upon the Latin and Greek classics in the German secondary school system of the time; and to distinguish this from the more scientific and practical type of training which was then just beginning to be advocated.[1] The word "humanism," used in Niethammer's sense, came to be applied by many nineteenth-century historians to those scholars of the Renaissance who had originally advocated and established the central role of classical studies in the European educational curriculum during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries; and who by the latter century had founded some of the grammar schools which were still carrying on the classical approach to education in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless,

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* Portions of this chapter were included in a paper which I gave before the Humanities Association of Canada, Meeting of the Maritime Provinces, in April 1968, entitled "The Development of English Humanism during the Fifteenth Century Until the Time of Colet."

[1] Cf. P. O. Kristeller, Renaissance Thought (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1961), pp. 9f.

as Paul Oskar Kristeller has shown, the term humanism used in the specific sense of the program and ideal of a classical curriculum of education is originally derived from the word humanista or "humanist", which was used during the Renaissance itself, and has been traced at least as far back as the year 1490.[2]

The Latin word humanista, together with its vernacular equivalents in Italian, French, English and other languages, was used in a precise sense during the sixteenth century for the professor, teacher, or student of the studia humanitatis, as these were understood during the period of the Renaissance revival of classical culture. To judge from the earliest appearances of the word humanista which have so far been traced, the word appears to have originated in the student slang in the Italian universities of this period. In this argot the teacher of the humanities came to be termed in the vernacular umanista by analogy with the terms which for several centuries had already come to be applied to his colleagues in the older university faculties. These included the legista, jurista, canonista, in the faculties of law, and the artista, or teacher of one or more of the seven liberal arts of the trivium and quadrivium. The term umanista was applied to the teacher of those studies which were held to lead to humanitas, or the civilized culture of the educated man.

The round of studies which by the beginning of the fifteenth century had come to be known in Italy as the studia humanitatis was, in fact, the source of the curriculum of studies still called the humanities in university education today. By 1401, in imitation of Cicero and Aulus Gellius, humanitas had come to denote in a work of Leonardo Bruni Aretino the result of the definite form of education which was the cultural ideal of Greek and Roman antiquity. Humanitas was in fact the Latin version of the ancient Greek paideia.[3] The scholars of fifteenth-century Italy, with their idea of a rebirth or renaissance of antiquity following the "barbarism" of the medium aevum, strove to revive the ancient Roman ideal (originally borrowed from Greece) of a humane or liberal education. This was the education thought fitting for the civilized and free man as opposed to the barbarian and the slave. Before the revival of Greek in Italy during the early Quattrocento this ideal had been found stated primarily in the works of Cicero and Aulus Gellius, a Latin writer of the second century A.D.[4]

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[2] Cf. ibid., p. 160. John Florio, in A Worlde of Wordes of 1598, an Italian-English dictionary, has the following entry: "Humanista, a humanist or professor of humanitie."

Marcus Tullius Cicero, the ancient writer with the most influence upon the Renaissance, had discussed the meaning of humanitas in both his De oratore and other works. In the De oratore, which was written during the first century B.C., Cicero states that Roman boys who will some day assume leadership in the public affairs of the respublica should be educated for this task by a special round of studies which would instil in them humanitas or a broad civilized culture. These studia humanitatis should include the following five disciplines: -- grammar, rhetoric,

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3. Cf. W. Jaeger, Paideia, tr. G. Highet, 3 vols. (New York, 1963); and Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1961).

4. Cf. W. K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition 1300-1520 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 291.

history, poetry, and moral philosophy. "We are called men," wrote Cicero, "but only those of us are human [*humanus*] who have been civilized by those studies which are proper to culture [*humanitas*]."[5] Thus, like the Greek *paideia*, the Roman *humanitas* was both the goal of culture and also the *curriculum* of education (the *studia humanitatis*) which would achieve that goal. The cultured man was the urbane man (*urbanus*) who was civilized by the urban culture of Athens or Rome, as opposed to the *rusticanus* or country bumpkin.

Cicero's description of *humanitas* was to be the major source of the wide and variegated movement which is known as Renaissance humanism. It seems to have been first introduced into Renaissance usage by Leonardi Bruni Aretino in the dialogue *De studiis et litteris* (*Concerning Studies and Literature*) which he wrote in 1401.[6] Understood as a curriculum of education or culture in preparation for public life in both Church and State in fifteenth-century Italy, the revival of this ancient ideal of culture was stated by Tommaso Parentucelli, the future Pope Nicholas V, in a youthful communication to Cosimo de' Medici with regard to the improvement of the latter's library in words that are almost identical to those of Cicero: "the *studia humanitatis* include grammatical, historical, rhetorical, poetical, and moral studies."[7]

The confusion which still exists today concerning the meaning of Renaissance humanism is not surprising when we find that it already existed when Aulus Gellius wrote his Attic Nights in the second century A.D. In this work Gellius found it necessary to define the precise meaning of humanitas in the following words, which were often read during the Renaissance:

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[5] See H. S. Lucas, *The Renaissance and the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 209.

[6] Cf. Kristeller, p. 159.

[7] Kristeller, *loc. cit.*

> Those who have spoken Latin and have used this language correctly do not give the word humanitas the meaning which it is commonly thought to have today; that is to say what the Greeks called philanthropia, which signifies a kind of friendly spirit and good feeling toward all men without distinction. Instead they give to humanitas roughly the meaning of the Greek paideia, that is to say, what we Romans call education or training in the good arts. Those who earnestly desire and seek to attain these good arts are the most highly human of men. For the pursuit of this kind of knowledge and the education which it gives have been granted to men only among the animals, and it is for this reason that it is termed humanity [humanitas].[8]

It was in conscious revival of this ancient ideal of humanity that the Renaissance humanists spoke of humanitas, the studia humanitatis, and the litterae humaniores; since they looked to ancient Rome and Greece for both the form and the content of their culture. This was based upon the ideal of the revival of the culture of antiquity which was supposedly lost in the West after the barbarian invasions of the late ancient period. It is this ideal of Renaissance humanism as the total study of both the form and content of ancient Roman and Greek literature as the truly human culture or humanity which differentiates Renaissance humanism from both the clerical humanism of the "Twelfth Century Renaissance" and even more from the scholastic culture of the high Middle Ages. This latter relied upon Greek logic, philosophy, and science, in the form that these reached the West during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries *via* the Moslem culture. We will show that Colet's Oxford lectures on the Pauline Epistles were unquestionably influenced by Renaissance humanism when understood in this sense; and that he uses his studies of history, rhetoric and poetry in his attempt to understand Christian antiquity with a view to using it as a model for the reformation of the Church.

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[8] Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, tr. J. C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library, 1927), vol. II, p. 457. Cited by W. K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), pp. 291-292. Despite this statement, however, both the ancient and Renaissance concepts of humanitas did include the Greek concept of philanthropia or the love of mankind. Cf. R. H. Bainton, Erasmus of Christendom (New York, Scribner's, 1969), pp. 41-42, and Rudolf Pfeiffer, Humanitas Erasmiana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931), pp. 3-4. I have transliterated the words philanthropia and paideia from Greek characters in the passage from Aulus Gellius.

The Introduction of Italian Renaissance Humanism into England during the Fifteenth Century

There were profound differences between the culture of medieval Italy and that of medieval France, Germany, and England.[9] Because of this and also because the Universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge were during the High and Later Middle Ages strongholds of clerical scholasticism, the Italian humanism which began to come to fruition during the Trecento in the writings of the Florentines Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Salutati did not really begin to influence English culture until the first half of the fifteenth century. Consequently when the noted Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini was in England between 1418 and 1422, he found very few manifestations of the influence of Italian humanism there. Poggio's letters to Italy during this period are filled with his disgust at the almost complete lack of "good letters" and "humane learning" in the England of this time. Poggio, who has been called "the leading humanist attached to the papal curia. and probably the most eminent in all Italy" during the first part of the fifteenth century, seems to have been a reliable judge in this matter. He had joined the papal curia in 1403, and remained one of its brightest humanist lights for fifty years, serving under five popes from Boniface IX to Nicholas V.[10] Poggio was too eager about his intellectual pursuits not to have helped improve the state of English scholarship in the humanities had he received opportunities or encouragement to do so. But the fact was that his studies were too advanced to find appreciation in England between 1418 and 1422. He seems to have brought about an interest in humanism in the case of only two Englishmen, both members of the household of Bishop (later Cardinal) Beaufort. These were Nicholas Bildestone, the Bishop's

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[9] The discussion which follows of the development of English humanism and its relationship to theology as the study of *sacrae literae*, the Bible and the Fathers, is indebted to R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwells, 1957), an invaluable pioneer work in this field, which has assisted me greatly in understanding Colet's intellectual development.

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[10] Cf. S. Harrison Thomson, Europe in Renaissance and Reformation (New York, 1963), p. 318.

Chancellor, termed by Poggio homo perhumanus, and Richard Petworth, Beaufort's secretary. Both these men were able to make use of humanistic Latin to improve the style of Bishop Beaufort's official correspondence.

Following Poggio's visit to England, the gradual development of English humanism during the first half of the fifteenth century seems to have owed most to officials of the papal curia in England and to a lesser degree to Englishmen who visited the papal curia at Rome or attended Italian universities. Of especial importance for this development was the humanistic influence of the papal chancery upon the English clergy. By about 1400 a knowledge of classical Latin had come to be considered essential for advancement in this organization. The reason for this was that after the papal court had returned from Avignon to Rome in 1378, its largely French officialdom had continued to reside at Avignon with the antipopes during the period of the Great Schism. The administration of the Roman line of popes had therefore become quickly Italianized. The consequence of this was that the new Italian humanistic standards developed during the Trecento were quickly introduced into the curial style of writing Latin. The great prestige of the papal chancery at this time began to attract more and more leading Italian humanists into its ranks, including Poggio, Pier Paulo Vergerio, Flavio Biondo, and Leonardo Bruni Aretino. The professional task of these men as papal secretaries was to draft the papal briefs in Latin which were sent from Rome to princely courts and higher clergy throughout Western Christendom. Already by the early Quattrocento these humanistically-trained papal secretaries had begun to form a clique within the curia which exerted a powerful influence in favour of the appointment of other humanists wherever these were being made to the Cancellaria. The result of this was to cause a constant improvement of the Latin literary standards requisite for papal employment. Thus during the first half of the fifteenth century the papal chancery came to enjoy a wide reputation for humanistic scholarship throughout Europe; so that princes and upper clergy in every country began to feel the need to employ humanistically-trained scholars themselves in order to meet the literary standards of the correspondence which they received from Rome at as high a level as possible. This was also the reason that the papal officials who were sent to England on ecclesiastical business during the fifteenth century were men of at least some pretension to learning in the humanities, and men who aimed for a humanistic style in their own official correspondence. They also naturally tended to encourage the Italian humanistic standards among all Englishmen with whom they came in contact. These were largely the English clergy, who were naturally more literate in Latin than the laity, despite the continual improvement of lay education throughout this period. For example, Giuliano Cesarini, who was sent to England in 1426 by Martin V in a fruitless attempt to gain the repeal of the obnoxious Statute of Provisors, was a competent humanist. He is known to have spent some of his spare time in England explaining the meaning of Justin Martyr to the chronicler George Hardyng, at the request of Cardinal Beaufort, the leading pro-papal statesman in England.

Furthermore, during this stay in England, Cesarini was probably in contact with both Humfrey Duke of Gloucester, the uncle of the young King Henry VI, and also with Oxford University; since we know that he was specially recommended by Martin V to both. Both Duke Humfrey and Oxford were destined to play very important rôles in the development of English humanism. In fact Humfrey of Gloucester was to be the most important of the early patrons of English humanism, through his series of gifts of classical and neo-classical books to Oxford between 1439 and 1444.

To the patronage and taste of Humfrey of Gloucester is due much of the credit for the fact that toward the middle of the fifteenth century Italian humanistic values had begun to affect English intellectual life, especially at Oxford. We do not know the precise origins of Humfrey's interest in Italian humanism, except that his family, including Kings Henry IV and Henry V, were keen bibliophiles. The most likely origin of this interest, however, was Humfrey's known contact with the tax collectors, such as Piero del Monte, and other papal envoys sent to England during the early fifteenth century. Together with these representives, personal friends like John Whethamstede Abbot of St. Alban's and Zenone da Castiglione, the Italian-born Bishop of Bayeux in English Normandy, seem to have played important rôles in developing the Duke's interest in humanism. Castiglione is known to have been instrumental in causing the Duke to become the patron of three of the leading Italian humanists of this period, Tito Livio Frulovisi, Pier Candido Decembrio, and Leonardo Bruni Aretino.

In 1433 Humfrey invited the eminent Leonardo Bruni to England; but Bruni's position at the papacy was by this time so elevated and secure that he declined a position in the barbarous North. Piero del Monte, papal tax collector in England from 1435 to 1440, then recommended instead Titus Livius Frulovisi, who seems to have been educated with himself at the humanistic school of Guarino da Verona at Ferrara. By 1437 Gloucester had engaged Frulovisi to come to England as his "poet and orator." Frulovisi's duties appear to have consisted in conducting part of Humfrey's official Latin correspondence; but especially in the preparation of a flattering humanist biography of the Duke's dead brother, King Henry V. This Vita Henrici Quinti was in fact the first work of genuinely humanist historiography to be written in England.

Another aspect of Humfrey's patronage of humanism was his writing to Italian scholars to ask them to prepare new Latin translations of classical Greek works, and also to procure humanistic books for his growing library. Thus in 1433 he wrote Aretino asking him to prepare a new Latin translation of Aristotle's Politics. This reached the Duke in 1438, and after this time Bruni's reputation began to grow in England. A fairly large number of his works were now imported from abroad, copied by hand, and later printed there during the fifteenth century. Various manuscripts of Aretino's writings presented by Gloucester to Oxford in 1444 were often transcribed during the fifteenth century by various members of the University. A new translation of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics by Bruni so rapidly replaced the inferior medieval translations that an edition of it was printed by Theodorick Rood at Oxford during the last quarter of the century. In fact, among the Italian humanists of the first half of the Quattrocento, Bruni's works were the best known in England. This was probably because his new Latin translations of Aristotle attracted the orthodox scholastics of Oxford and Cambridge as well as those Englishmen who were gradually becoming drawn to the humanities as such.

It was through the mediation of Zenone da Castiglione that Pier Candido Decembrio, a humanist in the papal curia, decided after 1432 to translate the whole of Plato's Republic into Latin and to dedicate it to the Duke of Gloucester. Decembrio was also instrumental in sending the Duke many humanistic books from Rome which were eventually bequeathed to Oxford and played a very important part in the development of Oxford humanism. In fact, the true rôle of Duke Humfrey of Gloucester in the development of humanism in England was that of a patron who supplied a very important collection of classical and neo-classical books to Oxford, at a time when it was still the stronghold of English scholasticism.

Duke Humfrey's patronage also extended to learned Englishmen, some of whom were affected by humanism in varying degrees. One of these was Thomas Bekyngton (ca. 1395-1465), the later Bishop of Bath and Wells. It was Bekyngton who raised the standards of official Latin epistolography in England by following the classical and Italian humanistic style in letter-writing. In about 1420 Bekyngton became Duke Humfrey's Chancellor. By around 1438 he was made secretary to Humfrey's nephew, King Henry VI, and it was after this that he began to introduce the standards of Italian humanism into the official Latin epistolography of the Crown. Between 1438 and 1443 Bekyngton participated in diplomatic missions for the King, in whose service he was able to put his humanistic learning, especially his oratorical style, to good account. In about 1441 he began a humanist correspondence, which survives, with Flavio Biondo, one of the most distinguished Italian humanists of the Quattrocento and a member of the papal curia.

Bekyngton's successful introduction of the standards of Italian humanism into the Latin of English diplomacy owed much of its success to the receptive ground it found in the clerically manned Civil Service. The English Civil Service of the later Middle Ages had had a long tradition of Latin literacy, primarily because its personnel was largely made up of clerks in holy orders who looked upon this service as an avenue to advancement in both Church and State. A growing interest in a Latin humanistic style became fashionable in an atmosphere in which skill in Latin phrasing was sure of appreciation. In fact, it could easily lead to advancement to the highest offices in the land, since the English kings had long depended upon clerics to fill many of the most important posts in the government. After Bekyngton's time a good knowledge of humanistic Latin was also considered an invaluable asset for all royal diplomats, most of whom were clergy. In fact it is probable that many of the humanistically inclined Englishmen of the next generation owed their advancement in both Church and State to their literary qualifications as well as to their political and administrative ability; and that they studied the humanities with this in view.

English Travellers to Italy during the Fifteenth Century and the Development of English Humanism

It was also during the fifteenth century that a number of English students, again primarily clerics, attended Italian universities for post-graduate studies after having taken earlier scholastic degrees at Oxford or Cambridge. The main cause of this development was the progress of the Hundred Years' War with France, which by the third decade of the century had made attendance difficult at the University of Paris where Englishmen had often gone for advanced studies prior to this time. By the third decade of the century the Universities of Padua and Bologna, both noted for humanistic studies, seem to have been especially patronized by Englishmen; most of whom were in holy orders and studied there in the faculties of theology and canon law.

Although most of these students appear to have returned to England with their traditional scholastic outlook on learning untouched, there were some exceptions. Thus William Grey, who would become Bishop of Ely, and Robert Flemmyng, the later Dean of Lincoln, both became influenced by the humanist approach to learning while studying at Padua University. Other Englishmen like John Free and John Gunthorpe went to Italy expressly to attend humanistic lectures there. Especially influential in this regard was the humanistic school which the famous humanist educator Guarino of Verona kept at Ferrara from 1429 until his death in 1460. This school included pupils drawn from countries all over Europe. Guarino held a position of great eminence among the Italian humanists of his day. He was a former pupil of the Byzantine Emanuel Chrysoloras, who had first introduced the study of Greek at Florence between 1397 and 1400. He had also spent some time in Constantinople in his youth, where he had both perfected his knowledge of Greek and gathered together an important collection of manuscripts of ancient Greek authors. After settling in Ferrara in 1429 Guarino had begun his teaching career. He kept up a voluminous epistolary correspondence with other Italian scholars of his time, in this way keeping himself acquainted with the latest trends in the humanistic world and the most recent discoveries of ancient texts.

Guarino's method of teaching the classical humanities consisted in dividing his courses into three parts, the elementary, the grammatical, and the rhetorical; approximately in accordance with the division advised by the first century grammarian and rhetorician, Quintilian. The grammatical course, which followed the elementary one, was divided into methodological and historical sections and dealt mainly with the acquisition of historical and mythological knowledge. The most advanced course, the rhetorical, was dedicated mainly to a textual explanation of the rhetorical writings of Quintilian and Cicero. Guarino also lectured on the texts of various important Latin and Greek authors.[11]

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[11] R. Sabbadini, La Scuola e gli Studi di Guarino da Verona, pp. 35-37.

By about 1450 Guarino and his school had acquired a firmly established international reputation, and some of his Latin letters appear in an epistolographical formulary which was probably prepared at the Benedictine monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury, at just about this time. In fact some of Guarino's writings were already being read in England during the first half of the fifteenth century. It seems that the popularity of his school in England was due to this dissemination of his writings and also to publicity given to them by his former pupils like Piero del Monte, the papal tax collector. Guarino's English pupils included not only William Grey and Robert Flemmyng, but also John Tiptoft, later Earl of Worcester, an important lay patron of humanistic studies and book collector like Humfrey of Gloucester.

William Grey was an important English pre-humanist of about the middle of the fifteenth century. He was the first Englishman known to have attended the school of Guarino at Ferrara. Like Flemmyng, Tiptoft, Bekyngton, Free, and probably Humfrey of Gloucester himself, Grey was a quondam alumnus of Oxford where he had studied theology and from 1440 to 1442 he was Chancellor of the University. Like the others also it is probable that his subsequent interest in humanism dates from the first donation to Oxford of humanistic books by Gloucester in 1439. Like most other Englishmen influenced by the humanities during this century, including Colet, Grey's main interest in humanism was not in secular literature but rather in theology or sacrae litterae. It was in fact to further his knowledge of theology that he left Oxford for Europe in 1442 with a numerous retinue once his term as Chancellor of Oxford had expired, beginning a tradition which would be followed by several Oxonian clerics as the century progressed. While he was at Padua where he obtained a further theological degree, Grey heard of the great reputation in the studia humanitatis of Guarino's school at Ferrara and arrived there in the autumn of 1445 in time for the beginning of the academic year. He attended Guarino's lectures, almost certainly those of the most advanced or rhetorical course and read the classics and philosophy. It was also while attending Guarino's school that Grey became the patron of Niccolò Perotti, a young and needy scholar who was destined to become one of the leading humanist grammarians of Italy. It is probably no chance that it is from Perotti's grammatical work, the Cornucopiae, and not from Valla, that Colet draws a philological definition in his shorter Exposition on Romans.[12] By 1446 Perotti was established in Grey's munificent household as his resident scholar and was provided with the means to buy the books he needed for his studies. In return he seems to have copied humanistic manuscript books for his patron.

On November 18, 1446, Grey was appointed Henry VI's Proctor at the Roman curia. In this promotion we see a good example of the great value of humane studies during the fifteenth century for advancement in both English Church and State which were at this time closely conjoined. On the death of Eugenius IV in 1447, Grey remained high in the favor of his successor Nicholas V who shared Grey's love of books and who had himself been a noted professional humanist before becoming pope. Because of this Grey was made a papal Protonotary by late 1448 and when the English see of Ely fell vacant in 1454 he was successfully provided to it by the favor of Pope Nicholas. While at the *curia* Grey also kept in close contact with many of the resident humanists including Cardinal Bessarion, the Byzantine Platonist theologian, and Poggio Bracciolini. Grey's library, which is now divided between Oxford and Cambridge, gives a good idea of the humanist interests of an Oxford trained theologian of this period. It consists primarily of theological treatises in manuscript together with several philosophical works which had recently been translated from Greek into Latin. These include the *Politics* and *Nicomachaen Ethics* of Aristotle as well as Plato's *Euthyphro*, *Timaeus*, and *Apology*. Grey also owned Lorenzo Valla's Latin translation of Thucydides and Ambrosius Traversari's Latin translations of works of St. John Chrysostom. As would later be the case with Colet, Grey appears to have taken little interest in the classical Greek language as such and he almost certainly could not read it. In fact his interest in humanist books was almost totally restricted to those new translations of Greek philosophy and theology which would serve to build on his scholastic education in these fields at Oxford. This was once again to be the case with Colet. Also of importance is the fact that Grey was equally interested in humanist Latin translations of the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, as Colet would be also. Grey eventually endowed Balliol College, Oxford, with the majority of his books where they became available to Oxford scholars after his death in 1478, just before Colet seems to have entered the University.

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[12] Cf. Colet, Scripta . . . in Epistolam divi Pauli ad Romanos, c.2, in Opuscula quaedam theologica, ed. Lupton, p. 81.

Men like Grey, Gloucester, and John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester were, however, essentially patrons of humanism and bibliophiles who shared little of the actual scholarly activity of the Italian humanists of the Quattrocento. However, their endowment of the English universities, especially Oxford, with their books was in itself a stimulus for English humane studies. But by about 1450 a new and more professional type of English clerical humanist began to appear, principally the product of Guarino's school at Ferrara.

The first Englishman known to present such features was Robert Flemmyng, who became Dean of Lincoln Cathedral in 1452.[13] A nephew of Robert Flemmyng, Bishop of Lincoln, he was born in about 1415. After studying theology at Oxford, Robert Flemmyng left to pursue his theological studies abroad, evidently following the path of William Grey. In 1446 and 1447 he studied theology at the University of Padua and also began to take an interest in the literae humaniores. After finishing his theological studies at Padua, Flemmyng like Grey before him attended the lectures of Guarino at Ferrara. While there he gained some knowledge of Greek and his Latin writings began to acquire a humanistic style. In 1451 Flemmyng left Ferrara and, again like Grey, immediately began to advance rapidly in the Church. On his return to

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[13] Cf. Weiss, op. cit., p. 97f.

England in 1452 he was made Dean of Lincoln. In 1453 he became chaplain to Henry VI; and in 1455 he was also elected Chancellor of Oxford University, the first case of anyone receiving this office without the doctorate. Soon after this he returned to Italy. Later Ludovico Carbone stated specifically in his funeral oration for Guarino da Verona that it was Flemmyng's proficiency in the *studia humanitatis* which caused the Dean to be chosen Henry VI's Proctor at the papal *curia* in 1455. In 1457 and again in 1458 he was appointed Henry's special orator or ambassador to Pope Calixtus III. This shows how important the study of the humanities, especially rhetoric, was at this time in order to gain so important a post in the English diplomatic service. In 1465, Flemmyng endowed Lincoln College, Oxford, with his humanistic books, almost certainly with a view to improving the theological standards of his uncle's foundation. Flemmyng's library, which is still there, is notable for its inclusion of both Biblical and patristic manuscripts in Greek. These include the *Acts of the Apostles*, the Pauline Epistles, and the liturgy of St. Basil the Great. There is also a Latin translation of St. John Chrysostom by George of Trebizond, Leonardo Bruni Aretino's Latin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and the works of Diogenes Laertius.

Flemmyng is the first Englishman known to have extended humanistic studies beyond book-collecting and patronage and to have learnt Greek. He was, however, also a patron of the *literae humaniores*, and he had made a definite effort to encourage a humanistic, that is to say, a biblical and patristic approach to theology at Oxford by 1465; and therefore clearly foreshadows Colet's humanistic lectures on the Pauline Epistles at the University after about 1496.

The Development of Oxford Humanism during the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century

In this section we can only touch upon the main points in the development of Oxford humanism, so far as it is known, until the time of Colet's residence at the university beginning in about 1483.

In the mid-fifteenth century, Oxford University was still fundamentally medieval in its outlook and has been characterized by Roberto Weiss as follows:

> Studies had undergone no radical change in their organization for centuries, and the Latin Aristotle still reigned infallible in the faculties of arts and philosophy as in the days of Chaucer's Clerk [of Oxenford]. The faculties of Theology and Decrees ruled the University and conditioned its outlook. 14

The attempt of Bishop Reginald Pecock, an Oxford graduate, to revivify scholasticism by writing anti-Wycliffite treatises in English for the laity to read, had brought about charges of heresy against him during the 1450's. Pecock had been forced to recant his writings to save himself from the stake and he spent the rest of his life in prison.[15]

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[14] Weiss, p. 131.

[15] Cf. V. H. H. Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock: A Study in Ecclesiastical History and Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1945); A. B. Ferguson, "Reginald Peacock and the Renaissance Sense of History," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 13 (1966), pp. 147-165.

Pecock's fall had been applauded in conservative Oxford. Because of the dominance of the Wycliffite heresy at the University during the late fourteenth and early years of the fifteenth century a conservative reaction had set in, and no institution in England seems to have been more zealous in the apprehension of heretics and the upholding of a rigid and dead Catholic orthodoxy than Oxford University in the mid-fifteenth century. The suppression of Oxford Wycliffism and the fall of Pecock brought to an end the original scholastic speculation for which the University had been famous during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By about 1450 an Oxford education had come to be generally looked upon as primarily an avenue to advancement in the Church and the royal service. Oxford had in fact reached a stage in its history when a departure from a dying scholastic tradition had become intellectually pressing. The tradition of scholarship appeared to be dying, and endowments and books were grossly insufficient. University politics were mainly directed toward flattering the great. The University was in bad need of a change in cultural values and the cultivation of fresh standards. This needed innovation now began to seep into the scholastic system of the clerically-dominated University through the values of Italian Renaissance humanism;-supported as this was by both the papacy and the great in English society, including the Lancastian, Yorkist, and Tudor kings.

Humanism would not, however, have had a successful start at Oxford had it not been supported by influential persons within University circles.

Given the state of the University's culture at this time, it was inevitable that the first homegrown English humanists should be men trained in the traditional scholastic curriculum of the seven liberal arts, the three philosophies (natural, moral, and metaphysical) and the higher faculties of theology and canon law. They attempted to revitalize all of these by the introduction of humane values and texts, most of which were imported from Italy as we have seen. An important figure in this respect was Thomas Chaundler, who along with Robert Flemmyng was one of the main pioneers of early Oxford humanism. After having received a degree in Canon Law in 1452, Chaundler was Warden of New College from 1454 to 1475, and from 1457 to 1461 and 1472 to 1479 he was Chancellor of the University. He thus spent almost his entire life at Oxford and used his exalted position to promote the growing interest in the humanities. This interest was aroused by Chaundler's access to the books which Duke Humfrey of Gloucester had given to the University, and through his contact with Thomas Bekyngton, Bishop of Bath and Wells, of whose diocese he was also Chancellor.

Humane studies developed steadily at Oxford during the period of Chaundler's Wardenship of New College and Chancellorship of the University. Consequently, by about 1483 when Colet entered the University, humanism had begun to show as ever-increasing independence from the medieval scholastic culture. By 1480 the Epistolae Academicae, the collection of the official letters of the University, show definite influence of the Italian literary values in their Latin.[16] This change to humanist cultural values is also quite noticeable about this time in the study of Latin grammar, which was the first art of the traditional medieval *trivium*, as well as of the *studia humanitatis*. Medieval Latin grammar had been dominated by the late ancient grammarians Donatus and Priscian; and it was only during the Quattrocento that Italian humanist grammarians suggested methodological innovations in its study. Among these works the *Elegantiae linguae latinae* by Lorenzo Valla and the *Rudimenta Grammaticae* of Niccolò Perotti, both written at about mid-century, soon became popular handbooks in Italy, and not long after their popularity had extended to Oxford. In 1483 John Anwykyll, grammar master at Magdalen College School, published his *Compendium totius grammaticae*, which was influenced by the works of both Valla and Perotti. Anwykyll had been commissioned by William of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester and founder of Magdalen College, to compose his *Compendium* as a treatise which would incorporate for Oxford scholars the most up-to-date Italian grammatical methods. Waynflete specified that Anwykyll's duties at the College's grammar school should include the teaching of "poems, elegances, and the art of humanity" to the boys. The *Compendium* gives a good illustration of the transition in Oxford culture at this time; because it combines both the medieval and the Renaissance systems in characteristic fashion. It consists of an abridgement of the works of Valla and Perotti blended together with the *Doctrinale* of Alexander of Villa Dei, which had been one of the most popular grammars of the High Middle Ages.

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[16] Epistolae Academicae Oxonienses, ed. H. Anstey, 2 vols., Oxford Historical Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898).

William Sellyng and William Grocyn

In 1487 Henry VII sent an embassy to the papal curia which was made up of six humanistically inclined clergymen. One of these, probably the most accomplished English humanist of the day, was William Sellyng, Prior of the important monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury. By the time of his death in 1494, Sellyng's studies had reached a point very little below the highest Italian standards in the humanities. Sellyng had become a monk of Christ Church in about 1448, and had progressed from its monastic school to Canterbury College, the Oxford House of the Christ Church Benedictines. While there he had combined the study of scholastic philosophy and theology with the humanities, according to the now familiar pattern. He is also known to have attended the lectures on Latin rhetoric there of Stefano Surigone of Milan, a member of the Humiliate order and self-styled "poet laureate," who was teaching at Oxford sometime between 1454 and 1464. Sellyng studied the composition of Latin orations with Surigone; and in 1464 he received permission from his superior to continue his studies at the Universities of Padua and Bologna. In 1472 he was elected Prior of Christ Church; and from then until his death in 1494 he seems to have divided his time between ecclesiastical duties, diplomatic activities, and humanistic literary studies, in a manner which parallels the other early English clerical humanists. Sellyng won an increasing reputation as a fine Latin orator and preacher; as was shown by the fact that he was chosen to deliver the sacred oration or sermon before the Canterbury Convocation in 1483.

In 1487 he was chosen by Henry VII's embassy to Rome to deliver their Latin oration before Pope Innocent VIII. In 1490 he was sent by Henry as one of the ambassadors to France to negotiate peace with Charles VIII. It was on this occasion that he met the French humanist Robert Gaguin of the Order of Trinitarians, one of the French King's diplomats. A correspondence in humanistic Latin was now begun between the two men which lasted until Sellyng's death in 1494.

Sellyng's Latin orations which survive show a command of classical Latin free from medieval "barbarisms" as well as a good acquaintance with the canons of rhetoric which had been established by the Italian humanists of the Quattrocento. He conforms to the highest standards of Renaissance oratory in his carefully restrained use of allusions to the classics and ancient history, in order to emphasize those allusions that he did make. He also stresses the form of the oration or sermon as a whole instead of its stock of quotations of authorities and information in the medieval scholastic manner. Whether or not he was in fact the teacher of Thomas Linacre at Christ Church, Canterbury, as John Leland stated in the sixteenth century, Sellyng appears to have played an important rôle in moulding the humanistically inclined Englishmen of the generation following him -- Grocyn, Colet, Linacre, William Latimer, and perhaps Thomas More and Richard Pace.

English humanism came fully of age with William Grocyn, of whose works, however, unfortunately only one letter appears to have survived, despite the high praise given to his scholarship by Erasmus. Grocyn was educated at the twin foundations of Winchester College and New College, Oxford, which he entered in 1465, and where he remained until 1481 as a fellow and must surely have come under the influence of Thomas Chaundler. In 1483 Grocyn was appointed Reader in Divinity at Magdalen College and in about 1487 or 1488 he left for Italy, having, according to Erasmus, already acquired the rudiments of Greek before leaving Oxford.[17] His only surviving work seems to be the prefatory letter which he wrote for Thomas Linacre's *De Sphaera*, which was published by Aldo Manutius at Venice in 1498.

The Oxford Printing Press

The publications of the Oxford printing press, in operation at the latest by 1483 and perhaps dating back to the 1470's, gives considerable proof of the spread of Italian humanism in the University by this time. Leonardo Bruni's Latin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cicero's *Pro Milone*, Lorenzo Valla's *Concerning the True Good*, and Pier Paulo Vergerio's *De Ingenuis Moribus* (an influential humanistic treatise on the ideals of a liberal education) were all printed in about 1483, as was Anwykyll's *Compendium totius grammaticae* as we have already seen. All these works must have had an interested public for Theodorick Rood to have considered them worth printing. Contemporary productions of other English printing presses, with the exception of that of William Caxton, show an ever-increasing demand by the last quarter of the century for the humane authors, both sacred and secular. During this period also, the book trade was constantly importing humanistic works from the Continent, both in print and in manuscript. Both kinds were often re-transcribed in England, thereby multiplying the copies. In fact, so many works of the Italian humanists were already current in England between 1475 and 1500, that they had become almost "standard authors" in a rapidly changing culture. Petrarch, Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni, Poggio, and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolimini (Pope Pius II) were treated as authorities and passages from their works were quoted side by side with those of medieval authors. Thus, by a gradual development which had acquired growing momentum during the fifteenth century, contemporary Italian humanism of the Quattrocento had acquired complete acceptability in certain circles of scholastic Oxford by the time of Colet's study there between about 1483 and 1492.

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[17] Cf. M. Burrows, "Memoir of William Grocyn," in *Collectanea*, II, ed. M. Burrows (Oxford Historical Society, 1890), p. 337; Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-174.

Summary of the Development of Oxford Humanism until the Time of Colet

Oxford humanism during the period of Colet's undergraduate years at Oxford from about 1483-92, during which time he was studying for "the title which expresses a knowledge of the seven liberal arts" [the M.A.],[18] was not surprisingly in many ways very different from contemporary Italian humanism, although it was also strongly influenced by it. Whereas in Italy by the end of the Quattrocento the cult of the antique had almost completely transformed cultural values from scholasticism, in England during this period the studia humanitatis were being used for the furtherance of the traditional scholastic goals of education. And whereas in Italy by the last decades of the fifteenth century the studia humanitatis were looked upon as being a new intellectual system which was in process of revising all the conceptions of the Middle Ages; Oxford humanism during this period was not considered an end in itself, but rather as a means for improving certain aspects of scholastic education especially theology. We can enumerate several causes for this fundamental difference, so essential for understanding the way in which humanism influenced the biblical commentaries and theology of John Colet.

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[18] P. S. Allen, *et al.*, eds., *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, IV, ep. 1211, p. 514, lines 263-65.

Firstly, English learning and the English universities were throughout the fifteenth century almost totally a monopoly of ecclesiastics.[19] Churchmen not only ruled the universities through the faculties of theology and canon law, but as the traditionally literate class they also occupied many of the most important posts in the State. The English language had not finally replaced French as the language of the royal court and the nobility until about 1450; and Latin, the international language of the Church and the universities, was still the language of diplomacy. The average lay Englishman, although he was becoming better educated as the fifteenth century progressed, still had much less book-learning than the university-educated clergy during this period. Thus all the English humanists, if we discount lay patrons of humanism and book-collectors like Gloucester and Tiptoft, were clergymen, most of whom had played important rôles in scholastically-oriented Oxford before turning to the studia humanitatis. After leaving the university these upper clergy were drawn according to the system of the period into ecclesiastical, political, and diplomatic activities, for all of which they found the litterae humaniores an excellent preparation. In fact, the English clerical humanism of the fifteenth century can almost be defined as a post-graduate course in administration and diplomacy which brought churchmen into contact with the cultural ideals of both the papacy and the English Crown. For given the rigid scholastic system of post-Wycliffite Oxford, if Italian humanism was to enter and transform the traditional English clerical culture, it had to do so by influencing the scholastically trained clerical élite who could afford the expensive but all-important luxury of a university education. English humanism of this period was thus continually influenced by the scholastic outlook and also the scholastic curriculum of the universities, especially Oxford.

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[19] Cf. Italian Relation of England, ed. C. A. Sneyd (London, 1847), p. 22. Cited by Weiss, op. cit., p. 179.

Next, a powerful factor in the original acceptance of humanism in England was the highly florid style of Latin which was already prevalent in important clerical literary circles at the very beginning of the fifteenth century. This was the style which the scribe of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1417 termed verborum florida venustas -- the flowery beauty of words.[20]

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[20] In October 1417 this scribe wrote that "Master Robert Gilbert, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, commended in flowery beauty of words the state of the university and the promotion of its graduates." Cf. E. F. Jacob, Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, 3rd ed., p. 185.

This florid Latin style was widely used by John Whethamstede, Abbot of the important monastery of St. Alban's, the friend of Humfrey of Gloucester and other early English admirers of Italian humanism. It seems clear that this florid university and monastic style served as a preparation for the later successful development of the studia humanitatis at Oxford as the fifteenth century progressed. This progress was greatly aided by the gifts of humanistic books to the university by Duke Humfrey of Gloucester between 1438 and 1441,and the patronage of the humanities by the leading clerics of the university throughout the latter part of the century. Another extremely important factor in this development was the pragmatic advantages of pursuing the humane studies for gaining advancement in both royal service and the Church. They were also a cultural hobby which the clerical élite could afford to pursue; and they contrasted most advantageously with the aridity of a decadent scholasticism.

By the last years of the fifteenth century a great many English travellers had studied in Italy, the center of both European culture and the Church; clearly with a view to improving the rudiments of the humanities which they had acquired in England, especially at Oxford. Two of the last of these travellers, Sellyng and Grocyn, returned to England having reached almost the highest standards of contemporary Italian humanism in Latin studies as well as a good proficiency in Greek. Grocyn seems to have returned to Oxford in 1491 after about three years in Italy. Colet seems to have left for Italy in the next year, 1492, in order to improve himself in the study of the ancient sacred literature, and apparently also in the study of Plato and the Platonists including the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the Latin translation of Marsilius Ficino. But the difference between Colet and the earlier English humanistically-oriented theologians was that he decided to use these studies as aids to understanding the Vulgate Bible and preaching the Gospel; rather than following the path of preferment through administration and diplomacy like most of his predecessors. We have been able to find no concrete evidence to support Seebohm's suggestion that Colet was converted in Florence into a reformatory preacher by Savonarola; although it is certain that Colet was influenced by the writings of Ficino and Pico della Mirandola of that city. Colet returned to Oxford in about 1495 or 1496, and decided to use his humanistic learning to restore "the old and true theology" of the Bible by taking a fresh approach to the Epistles of St. Paul, his favorite among the Apostles. We will show below that Colet's expository lectures on Paul stood in the older medieval tradition of Biblical exposition as a preparation for preaching. He also used the Italian humanist skills of rhetoric and the concern for historical context to achieve this purpose, rather than the artificial methods of fifteenth-century scholastic exegesis. Like other members of the humanist élite, Colet was given preferment by the King; in his case to the Deanery of St. Paul's, London, the premier Cathedral of England. However unlike earlier English clerical humanists, Colet used this important post as he did his humanistic studies in order to preach the Gospel to the laity from the Bible, and to appeal for and attempt to bring about the long-desired reform of the Church. Colet would also help inspire Erasmus of Rotterdam, the Dutch Augustinian canon and humanist whom he met in Oxford in 1499, to dedicate himself to furthering the humanistic study of the Bible and the Fathers as a means to Catholic reform. We will now examine the meaning of Colet's Oxford lectures and his relationship with Erasmus; and then pass on to an examination of Colet's practical program for the reform of the Church, as expressed in his Convocation Sermon of February 6, 1511/1512. We will show that Colet's desire for a reform of the Catholic Church by a return to the fount of its original purity is the unifying factor which underlies every aspect of his career.

Chapter Three

COLET'S EARLY LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Family Background

John Colet (1467?-1519) was the eldest son and only surviving child of Sir Henry Colet, "Assistant" of the Mercers' Company and twice Lord Mayor of London, and the former Mistress Christian Knyvet (or Knevet).[1] Sir Henry Colet was one of the leading English citizen merchants of his day; as was evidenced by his being elected to two separate annual terms as Lord Mayor of London, the Capital and most important city of England, in 1486 and 1495. Sir Henry had been one of the most ardent supporters of the accession of Henry, Earl of Richmond, as the first of the Tudor monarchs in 1485; a fact which helps explain the favor which both Henry VII and Henry VIII showed towards his only surviving child. John Colet's mother, who came to be known as Dame Christian after her husband received his knighthood from Henry VII on January 13, 1486/1487, was closely related to a member of the highest rank of the English nobility.[2] Sir John Knevet, Dame Christian's brother, made his second marriage to Joan, the daughter of Henry Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham who had lost his life for supporting a premature uprising on behalf of Henry Tudor during the brief reign of Richard III. Dame Christian's father, Sir John Knevet, Senior, was sheriff of the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, and held large properties in Norfolk. John Colet, the eldest son and only surviving child of this marriage, was thus the sole heir of a union between an extremely successful and rich London mercer and citizen and a wife closely related to the landed nobility. Furthermore, Henry VII was especially beholden to Sir Henry Colet, who had undertaken to give his single bond on behalf of the merchants of London for the King in the important treaty of peace between England and Flanders which was signed in 1496.[3]

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[1] John Colet died on September 16, 1519, when, according to Erasmus, he was almost fifty-three years old. The exact date of Colet's death was given in the inscription on the leaden plate on his coffin, which is copied on a manuscript in the Ashmolean, Oxford. See Frederic Seebohm, The Oxford Reformers: John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1869), p. 505, note. In his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521, which contains his biography of Colet, Erasmus states that Colet was "some two or three months younger than myself." Erasmus, The Lives of Jehan Vitrier and John Colet, ed. and tr. J. H. Lupton (London: Bell and Sons, 1883), p. 23. Erasmus was born in the night of October 27-28; but it is uncertain which year, although according to Albert Hyma most biographers agree on the year 1466. Thus, if we can depend upon Erasmus, who was not very accurate with regard to dates, Colet was probably born in late December of 1466, or in January of 1467.

According to Erasmus, John Colet was by 1499 the only surviving child of the eleven sons and eleven daughters whom Dame Christian bore to Sir Henry Colet. As the eldest son he would have inherited the entire estate of his parents by English law even if any of his brothers or sisters had survived.[4] All these factors in his family background were to play an important rôle in the formation of character and interests of John Colet. The eminence of his family was the cause of the many rich benefices which began to be showered on him even before he was ordained deacon in 1497.[5] This same eminence and fortune played an important role in giving Colet that self-assurance and commanding presence which had such a striking effect on other people;of which Erasmus was immediately aware when he first met Colet in 1499.[6] It was his favored circumstances in life,also, which permitted Colet to travel to France and Italy between about 1492 and 1496 and to buy the books which would have so important an influence upon his Biblical commentaries and theological ideas. The death of twenty-one brothers and sisters, if Erasmus is accurate on this score,may have caused Colet to suspect that he too might well be marked for an early death; and probably played an important role in his decision to enter the Church. Finally, Colet's inheritance of his father's large

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[2] Henry Colet was knighted by Henry VII on the occasion of the King's marriage to Elizabeth of York, January 13, 1486/1487. Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, ed. S. Lee *et al.*, IV, p. 777.

[3] This bond is printed from the British Museum Cotton MS. Vitellius A. 16 in Samuel Knight, *The Life of Dr. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's in the Reigns of K. Henry VII. and K. Henry VIII. and Founder of St. Paul's School*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1823), pp. 277-278.

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4. See Erasmus' letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521, tr. by J. H. Lupton as *The Lives of Vitrier and Colet*, pp. 19-21. "[Colet's] mother, who still survives, is a most worthy woman. She bore her husband eleven sons and as many daughters; of whom John, as the eldest, would have been heir to the entire estate, according to the English law, even had the others been alive. But, at the time when my acquaintance with him began [i.e., in 1499], he was the sole survivor of the band. To these advantages of fortune were added that of a tall and graceful figure."

5. Colet was ordained deacon, the lowest of the major orders of the clergy, on December 17, 1497 by a suffragan of Thomas Savage, Bishop of London. At this time Colet was a Master of Arts and already a canon of the Church of St. Martin le Grand,London, and prebendary of Goodeaster. See Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 20, note "s." He was ordained priest on the Feast of St. Anne, 1497. *Ibid.*, p. 20, note "t."

6. See especially Erasmus' letter to John Sixtin dated by P. S. Allen in November 1499. P. S. Allen, *et al.*, eds., *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906-1958), I, ep. 116, p. 268, lines 22-31.

fortune on the death of Sir Henry in 1505, enabled him to re-endow with munificence the grammar school of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, of which he was now Dean. This was to be one of the leading examples of an educational institution dedicated to the ideals of Christian humanism during the English Renaissance.[7]

Sir Henry Colet appears to have been a pious lay Christian of a type characteristic of Londoners in the fifteenth century. There is no evidence that he was affected by the Lollardy which was influencing a number of London citizens at this time, and which was to cause such a scandal between the Londoners and the clergy in the notorious case of Richard Hunne in 1513. Sir Henry was certainly a liberal benefactor of his parish church of St. Antholin, London; and in 1505 when the University Church of St. Mary the Great was being built in Cambridge, Dr. Samuel Knight tells us that Sir Henry's "name occurs among the letters writ . . . to divers of the prime nobility and persons of note, for contributions towards so good a work."[8]

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[7] Sir Henry Colet died shortly before October 20, 1505, the date on which his will was probated. See J. H. Lupton, _A Life of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's and Founder of St. Paul's School_, 2nd ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1909), p. 3. In his _Life of Colet_, Erasmus says that Colet was always especially on his guard against the sin of covetousness or concupiscence. See P. S. Allen _et al._, _op. cit._, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 519-520. Regarding Colet's inheritance from his father, Erasmus writes that "his private fortune, a very large one, [Colet] decided to dispose of for charitable purposes. At his father's death he had inherited a large sum of money, and fearing that if he hoarded it up it might engender in him a certain disease, he built with it in St. Paul's cemetery a new school of splendid structure sacred to the Boy Jesus." _Ibid._, p. 517. This disease which Erasmus says that Colet feared was almost certainly covetousness.

[8] Cf. Knight, _op. cit._, p. 6, who cites the Proctors' Book of Cambridge University for this information.

Dame Christian Colet was an outstanding woman in her own right. Erasmus was very much impressed with her character and her devotional piety; and in his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521 refers to her as "insigni probitate mulier."[9] Colet himself also gives us a glimpse of her character in a letter which he wrote to Erasmus in March 1512. He speaks of his mother's great sorrow at the death of one of his own servants "who died at her house, whom she loved as a son, and for whose death she wept as though he had been more than a son."[10] Erasmus also told Justus Jonas that Dame Christian had borne up cheerfully up to the death of every one of her twenty-two children with the sole exception of the future Dean.[11]

From this brief descripton of his parents we can, I think, understand the qualities that Colet was to display as a courageous, ascetic, and in some ways "Puritan" priest and preacher.[12] It is also possible that Colet's interest in humanistic studies; which was to play an important part in his ideas of Biblical exegesis, his theological development, and his ideals of Christian education and Church reform, were originally influenced by his background and the contact of his family with the monarchy and court; although they were to be developed during the period of his education at Oxford University and study abroad.[13] His family fortune and the high favor with which his father stood with Henry VII help explain how Colet was able to take a largely independent attitude toward his religious studies; and to maintain in both lecture-room and pulpit an outspoken attitude to the attitudes of the Church of his day. All the same, these undoubtedly played an important role in the accusation against him of heresy by his diocesan, Bishop Fitz-james of London, in 1513.

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[9] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 514. Dame Christian survived her son. She appears to have died in 1522.

[10] Allen, I, ep. 258, p. 508: "Eram . . . apud meam genetricem, vt consolarer dolentem de morte servi mei, qui interiit in domo illius; quem dilexit loco filii, et fleuit mortem illius plusquam mortem filii sui."

[11] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 514.

[12] See H. Maynard-Smith, Pre-Reformation England (London: MacMillan, 1938), pp. 452 f., who exaggerates between "Colet the Puritan" and "More, the Christian Humanist"; although he recognizes that Colet was a Catholic reformer. But despite the fact that this contrast is oversimplified and that it is unwise to use the term "Puritan" with regard to a figure who lived before the English Reformation, it is nevertheless clear that

Colet's Education

A great deal of uncertainty still hangs over Colet's education, especially his pre-university schooling. His best biographer, Joseph Hirst Lupton, states that "it is commonly supposed that he went to the school of St. Anthony's Hospital, Threadneedle Street" in London. Lupton admits, however, that this is little more than a conjecture; since it depends upon the rather inaccurate Anthony Wood, the seventeenth-century Oxford antiquary.[14] Wood goes on to state in his

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Colet's exegesis and theological thought show the strongly moral stress which was characteristic of English religion later in the sixteenth century. Cf. W. A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1964), pp. vii, 2-3, and passim. However, Colet stressed morality as the clue to theological doctrine before 1520.

[13] Henry VII, like his Yorkist predecessors, encouraged the development of humanism. See Colet's letter to Henry's Grand Almoner, the humanist Dean of York, Christopher Urswick, in 1493, printed by W. K. Ferguson, "An Unpublished Letter of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's," American Historical Review, XXXIV (1934), p. 699.

[14] Lupton, Life of Colet, p. 15. Lupton admits that this is based on little more than conjecture.

Athenae Oxonienses that Colet was sent to Oxford in "about 1483 (at which time one or more of his sirname [sic] were of S. Mary Magdalen College) where, after he had spent seven years in logicals and philosophicals, [he] was licensed to proceed in arts."[15] But although it is almost certain that it was at Oxford that Colet took his M.A. before leaving for further study in France and Italy in late 1492 or early 1493, there is in fact no definite evidence that Colet was at Oxford until he began to lecture on St. Paul's Epistles there in about 1496. However, Polydore Vergil the historian and papal tax collector, who was a contemporary of Colet, says that the Dean was a student at both Oxford and Cambridge. Unfortunately, the Registers of Oxford University are missing for the crucial years between 1463 and 1505.[16]

Despite the elaborate reconstruction of Colet's Oxford career by Sears Jayne in his recent book, John Colet and Marsilio Ficino, the only definite contemporary information about Colet's earlier education is given in a letter which Erasmus wrote to Justus Jonas on June 13,

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[15] Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, ed. Philip Bliss (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, etc., 1813), vol. I, col. 22. Also cited by Sears Jayne, John Colet and Marsilio Ficino (Edinburgh, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 14.

[16] Cf. C. W. Boase, ed., The Register of the University of Oxford, 1449-1463, 1505-1571 (Oxford Historical Society, 1885), I, pp. v-vii; A. B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500 (Oxford University Press, 1957), vol. I, pp. 462-464, and Allen, IV, pp. 514-515. Knight, p. 18, note "n", quotes Polydore Vergil, Historia Anglica divinarum, Book VI: "Coletus . . . se ad divinarum literarum studium contulit, et Paulum sibi praeceptorem delegit; in eoque cum Oxonii et Cantabrigiae, tum in Italia ita exercuit . . ." It seems probable that Polydore Vergil is wrong about Colet's studying at Cambridge; since this is suggested by no other source.

1521, which incorporates the Dutch Scholar's biography of his dead friend.[17] Erasmus' words are as follows:

> During [Colet's] young days in England he diligently studied scholastic philosophy among his own people and gained the title which expresses the knowledge of the seven liberal arts [the M.A.]. Of these disciplines there was not one in which he had not knowledgably and happily trained himself; for he had both devoured the books of Cicero most avidly and had examined the books of Plato and Plotinus in no careless fashion; nor was there any part of mathematics which he left untouched. After this, like a merchant avid for good things he went to France and soon afterwards to Italy. While abroad he gave himself up wholly to studying the sacred authors. But before this he had roamed in intensive study through every kind of literature, and delighted above all in those early authors, Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome. And among the old writers there was none to

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17. Jayne's reconstruction of an Oxford career for Colet from about 1483 until his continental tour beginning in 1492 is based upon the information from Erasmus' letter to Jonas interpreted with the assumption that Colet carried out the University's statutory regulations for gaining the B.A., M.A., and B.Th. degrees. Jayne, op. cit., pp. 14-37. Erasmus clearly states that when he first met Colet, which P.S. Allen has shown to have been in 1499, Colet "had neither obtained nor sought for any degree in theology." Allen, IV, p. 515: " . . . Oxoniae . . . hominem nosse coepi. . . . In theologica professione nullum omnio gradum nec assequutus erat nec ambierat. . . ." Erasmus' argument turns upon this statement, since he says that it was amazing that the Oxford doctors of theology and law and abbots of monasteries should listen to and take notes from this young man without any theological degree. There is no real evidence that Colet worked for or received the B.Th. degree. Erasmus says that Colet only accepted the title of doctor (of theology) to please those who offered it to him and not because he sought for it. But see Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 516, lines 290 to 292. See Jayne, p. 20 f., who argues that Erasmus was wrong and that Colet's Oxford lectures on the Pauline Epistles were a way of fulfilling the requirement for the B.Th. degree. There is in fact no reason whatever to suppose that Erasmus was mistaken on this point. Jayne says that these Biblical lectures would contravene the Oxford statutes in these circumstances, but he does not allow for the fact that the statutes were often ignored by the late fifteenth century.

> to whom he was more biased than Augustine. . . . Soon after his return from Italy he left the dwellings of his parents since he preferred to stay in Oxford. There he publicly expounded all the Pauline Epistles free of charge. 18

Except for the brief mention of Colet's education in the Historia Anglica of Polydore Vergil already cited, there is no other contemporary source of information about Colet's education except the brief life by George Lily, the son of the first high master of St. Paul's School, whose account is almost totally based upon the letter of Erasmus to Jonas.[19] Professor Sears Jayne's carefully worked out thesis that Colet's visit abroad and his lectures on the entire canon of the Pauline Epistles were a way of meeting the statutory requirements of Oxford University for the B.D. degree is thus an assumption which the evidence does not support, and it contradicts the express statement of

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18. Ibid., pp. 514-515: "Adolescens apud suos quicquid est scholasticae philosophiae, diligenter perdidicit, ac titulum assequutus est qui septem liberalium artium scientiam profitetur. Quarum nulla erat in qua ille non fuisset gnauiter ac feliciter exercitatus: nam et libros Ciceronis auidissime deuorarat, et Platonis Plotinique libros non oscitanter excusserat, nec vllam mathematices partem intactam reliquit. Post tanquam auidus bonarum rerum negociator adiit Galliam, mox Italiam. Ibi se totum euoluendis sacris autoribus dedit; sed prius per omnia literarum genera magno studio peregrinatus priscis illis potissimum delectabatur, Dionysio, Origene, quam Augustino. . . . Iam reuersus ex Italia, relictis parentum aedibus Oxoniae maluit agere. Illic publice et gratis Paulinas Epistolas omnes enarrauit."

19. George Lily was the son of the William Lily whom Colet chose to be the first "high master" of his refounded St. Paul's School. The son includes a brief life of Colet in his Virorum aliquot in Britannia Elogia addressed to Paulus Jovius, which was first printed with Jovius' Descriptio Britanniae (Venice: M. Tramezinus, 1548). See Allen, IV, p. 514, note to line 262. Lily's account has a great many verbal resemblances to the Latin of Erasmus' letter to Jonas, and this was clearly its model. According to Allen the only sentence in the account which adds to Erasmus' information is the rather fuller description of Colet's personal appearance on folio 46.

Erasmus. Jayne bases his case on the very weak argument that Erasmus "may very well be wrong, and probably is, about Colet's intentions in 1496" to complete the requirements for the Oxford B.D.; "since [Erasmus] did not even meet Colet until three years later." [20] This is completely beside the point, because Erasmus expressly states in a contemporary letter which he wrote to Colet in 1499 that Colet was still in the process of lecturing on the entire Pauline canon upon which he had been engaged for three years.[21] The question is therefore not only what Colet intended by beginning to lecture on Paul on his first return from the Continent, probably in 1496; but whether Colet was still engaged in meeting academic requirements in an unusual way in 1499 when Erasmus first met him at Oxford and Colet was still lecturing on Paul. Erasmus may possibly have attended some of these lectures himself; since in his first letter to Colet he is able to describe Colet's style of speaking before he had met him.[22] In his biographical letter

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20. Jayne, op. cit., p. 22.

21. Allen, I, ep. 108, p. 248. Allen dates his letter October, 1499. Erasmus says that " . . . nullus etiam doctorum sit in hac celeberrima schola [Oxoniensis florentissima Academia] qui tibi Paulinas epistolas publice iam triennium enarranti non attentissimas aures prebuerit."

22. Allen, I, ep. 107, p. 245. In discussing the style of Colet's first letter to him (Allen, I, ep. 106), Erasmus passes from Colet's way of writing to the whole manner in which he expresses his thoughts. "You do not speak first and think afterwards; but your thoughts are followed spontaneously by words born in the heart and not on the lips. With a certain happy facility you pour forth those things without difficulty which someone else would scarcely be able to express by intense study." Since Colet's original letter, which Erasmus is here answering, was quite short and could not have given Erasmus this information; and Erasmus was at this time already interested in vetus illa ac vera theologia, it seems probable that Erasmus had already heard Colet lecture. See Allen I, ep. 108, p. 247.

to Justus Jonas in 1521, Erasmus says that Colet did not seek any theological degree at the time of his Pauline lectures; and this must include the doctoral degree with which Oxford eventually rewarded him, but which was given spontaneously. We know from other sources that this degree was the *sacrae theologiae doctor* or *sacrae paginae professor*.[23] It is significant that Jayne accepts the statements of Erasmus' biography when it suits him to do so; but rejects his explicit statement on this point. But this was a matter of great interest to Erasmus himself who thought of taking a Cambridge doctorate; and one upon which he would hardly have been mistaken.[24] We examine the reliability of Erasmus' *Life* of Colet in Appendix I.

It was probably in late 1492 that Colet set out for further study abroad in France and Italy.[25] He was in Paris in October 1495, when Robert Gaguin's *Historia Francorum* appeared there accompanied by a dedicatory epistle from Erasmus; and he appears to have begun his lectures on St. Paul's Epistles at Oxford in the Michaelmas or Autumn term of 1497. Nothing definite is known about Colet's period of foreign study except that he was in Rome in March, April, and May of 1493, and that he studied Canon Law at the University of Orléans with Francis DeLoine. It is not known when this latter period of study took place, but we assume that it was at the end of this period on the Continent because Erasmus in his biography of Colet mentions only one period in which Colet travelled abroad. It has been recently argued by Sears Jayne that Colet did not see Ficino while he was in Italy.[26] This is not absolutely certain; but in any case what is really important is that Colet certainly read and was influenced intellectually by the books of both Ficino and the elder Pico della Mirandola during this period of his life. It is our contention that it was in fact in Ficino's Latin translations that Colet read the works of Plato and Plotinus before he left for France and Italy, since it is known that he did not know much Greek. Furthermore, it is certain that he had read at least the fourteenth chapter of Ficino's Theologia Platonica (first published in 1482) by the time that he wrote his Oxford enarratio on Romans in about 1496. It seems to us probable that it was in 1495 that Colet bought his copy of Ficino's

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[23] The titles *doctor* and *professor* were exactly equivalent at Oxford at this time. Colet's entry in the register of Doctors Commons in the Lambeth Palace Library, fol. 8r, is written against the name "Johes Colett, s.p.p." See Jayne, *op. cit.*, Plate III of the series of photostatic plates following p. 136. See Strickland Gibson, *Statuta Antiqua Universitatis Oxoniensis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. cx. The Oxford doctor of theology was entitled *sacrae theologiae doctor*, *sacrae scripturae professor*, or *sacrae paginae professor* (s.p.p.).

[24] But see Jayne, pp. 23, 24.

[25] Cf. W. K. Ferguson, "An Unpublished Letter of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's," *AHR* (1934), pp. 696-99; and S. Jayne, *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 17. In this letter to

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Urswick Colet makes clear that he had seen him in Rome. Urswick seems to have left Rome on this embassy from Henry VII to Pope Alexander VI in late 1492, so that it is likely that Colet was in Rome by the last months of this year. The letter from Colet to Urswick is printed in Ferguson, op. cit., p. 699.

[26] Cf. Jayne, Colet and Ficino, p. 18. Jayne bases his argument on the fact that in Colet's draft letter to Ficino written on a back flyleaf of the All Souls copy of Ficino's Epistolae familiares (1495), which Jayne dates "April, 1499(?)," Colet writes that he has not yet seen Ficino.

collected *Epistolae familiares* which contain answers to many theological questions raised by correspondents who had read his *Theologia Platonica* and other works. Colet's copious marginal annotations to his copy of Ficino's *Epistolae* have been recently edited by Sears Jayne.

It is not known exactly when Ficino began to give his lectures on St. Paul's Epistles in the Cathedral of Florence, of which he was a Canon; except that it was during the last years of his life before his death in 1499. Only part of one of this series of lectures survives and these are lectures on *Romans*. These were not printed until after Colet's death in 1519. However the humanists usually circulated their works in manuscript, so that it seems likely that Colet had read these even if he did not hear Ficino lecture. If our dating of 1495 for Colet's surviving letter to Ficino is accepted, Colet already showed an extreme admiration for Ficino's work by this time, as the letter makes clear. This admiration is also clear in Colet's *enarratio* on *Romans*.[27] However, our examination of the twenty-six chapters which survive on *Romans* in Ficino's *In prooemium Pauli* shows that although Ficino used a humanistic approach to the Epistles of Paul, he did not use the historical approach of Colet.[28] It seems to us probable that Colet learnt his humanist as opposed to the traditional scholastic approach to Paul from reading the lectures in manuscript,and on his return to Oxford developed his own historically and rhetorically-oriented humanist approach to St. Paul. Colet appears to have begun his Oxford lectures with Romans, and it would seem to be no chance that he chose the same Epistle upon which a fragment of Ficino's commentary survives; although it is of course the first Epistle of the Pauline canon and also the fullest one theologically. Furthermore, Ficino not only held that the Pseudo-Dionysius was the greatest of the Platonists (culmen Platonicorum), but also that he was the direct disciple of St. Paulmentioned in Acts 17:34. Colet eventually rejected the influence of "heathen philosophy" on the exposition of Holy Scripture; but he continued to be influenced by the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius in his writings until near the end of his life.[29]

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[27] Cf. *Ioannis Coleti A.M. Enarratio in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos*, c. 8, pp. 155-57. Colet's letter to Richard Kidderminster, Abbot of Winchcombe, together with evidence within the *Enarr. Rom.* itself, argue strongly that it was with *Romans* that Colet began his lectures at Oxford in about the autumn of 1496. See Knight, *Life of Colet*, pp. 265-68, and *Enarr. Rom.*, pp. 58, 56, where Colet says that he began his commentary on *Romans* for himself alone and only agreed to continue the lectures because of the persuasion of certain friends who were devoted listeners to his exposition.

[28] See M. Ficino, *In prooemium Pauli . . .*, in *Opera omnia*, Vol. I, tomus i (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1959), pp. 457-72. Sears Jayne is quite wrong when he calls these lectures an example of the "old-fashioned scholastic technique of Biblical exegesis." Jayne, *op. cit.*, p. 26, and note 1.

There is no question about the influence of both Ficino and Pico on Colet's theological writings; although the influence of Ficino seems to be strongest on his earliest work. Despite the great difficulty of dating Colet's works with absolute assurance, it is our contention that Colet came under the direct influence of Ficino and Pico during his

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[29] See the report of Colet's sermon on the occasion of Wolsey's elevation to the cardinalate on November 18, 1515, in R. Fiddes, Life of Cardinal Wolsey, 2nd ed. (London, J. Knapton, et al., 1726), Collections, pp. 201-202, where the rank of Cardinal in the ecclesiastical hierarchy is made parallel to the Seraphim in the celestial hierarchy of the angels. See also Colet's letter to Erasmus dated by P. S. Allen, circa June 1517, where Colet tells Erasmus that the "short way" to Jesus is by the threefold Dionysian path through purification, illumination, to perfection. Allen, II, ep. 593, p. 599, lines 15-21.

European visit from about 1492 to 1496; and that it was through Ficino that Colet principally derived his interest in Platonist philosophy and a platonizing philosophical theology. Erasmus says that Colet had read deeply in both Plato and Plotinus before he left for Italy; but since Colet read very little Greek, it seems to us that he began his study of Ficino's writings with the Florentine's translations of the two Greek authors and then proceeded to the Theologia Platonica and the Epistolae familiares. Because the latter of these two works was not published until February 1495, Colet could not have bought his copy and annotated it until his period of foreign travel at the earliest. However, in disagreement with Sears Jayne, we believe it likely that Colet bought this book in Italy at about the time that it first came out and at about the same time or soon afterwards he began the correspondence with Ficino which is copied in his handwriting in the back of the All Souls College, Oxford, copy of the Epistolae (Venice, 1495). Colet's letter in this correspondence must post-date his purchase of this book; because the original draft of it, deleted, is written on a back flyleaf together with a corrected final draft. Colet has also copied in his own handwriting two of Ficino's letters, one of which his own letter answers and the second of which answers his letter.[30] It seems most likely that a first letter of Colet's which is now lost, but which Ficino's first letter answers, was written before the purchase of the book sometime in 1495, probably during the first half of the year. Otherwise, we would assume, Colet would have composed or copied this letter in his copy of the Epistolae as well. If our argument is valid, it means that Colet could in fact have heard and met Ficino at Florence during 1495, that is to say, after his letter in which he says he has not yet seen the Florentine scholar but longs to do so; but before early October of that same year. For, as he later wrote Erasmus, he was in Paris at the time of the appearance in print of Gaguin's De origine et gestis francorum . . . compendium which appeared on September 30, 1495. If this argument is accepted it means that Colet could in fact have heard or visited Florence on his way to France in 1495 and have heard or read Ficino's unpublished work on Romans. This would also explain the persistent tradition that Colet did visit Florence and came under the direct influence of Ficino, which has been neither proved nor disproved unless Jayne's tentative date of "April 1499 (?)" is accepted. A further factor which assists our argument is the fact that Colet's draft letter to Ficino is written in the kind of fulsome humanistic Latin prose which is somewhat evident in his letter to Christopher Urswick of April 1, 1493; but which is noticeably absent from his later theological writings, with the partial exception of the early enarratio on Romans. Otherwise we are forced to consider that Ficino's influence on Colet was entirely indirect and that Colet either managed to read Ficino's Pauline lectures in manuscript while he was in Italy; or was not influenced by them and decided independently to comment on the Epistles from an historical and rhetorical approach. These seem to us less likely alternatives since it would mean that although Colet was influenced by a large number of Ficino's writings, spent three years in Italy and France, and was clearly influenced by the Renaissance idea of the Platonic Academy, he was nevertheless not influenced by the fact that while he was in Italy Ficino was lecturing on the Pauline Epistles from a humanistic approach. It would also mean that although Colet wrote Ficino that "he longed to see him in person"; he never did so but was nevertheless strongly influenced by his platonizing theology and chanced to imitate Ficino by giving lectures of his own on the same Pauline Epistles soon after his return to Oxford in 1496 or 1497.

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[30] Cf. Jayne, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

It is indeed unfortunate that only fragments of Ficino's lectures on St. Paul survive and that the years in which they were given are not absolutely certain. However if we date Colet's letter to Ficino shortly after the publication of the *Epistolae familiares* in February 1495, it becomes quite possible that, as we would expect, Colet followed up his letter with a visit to Florence between this time and his appearance in Paris at some time after September 30th, 1495. But this visit to Paris need not in fact have been until some time after the original appearance of Erasmus' epistle with Gaguin's *De origine et gestis francorum* on September 30th of this year.[31] If Colet's Oxford lectures on Paul did not begin until the fall of 1497, as seems to us likely, it is possible that Colet either returned to

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[31] See Colet's letter to Erasmus of about October 1499. Allen, I, ep. 106, p. 242, lines 3-7.

Italy and Florence from France; or, what is more likely, he arrived in Paris at some time in 1496 and read Erasmus' dedicatory epistle to Gaguin then. The learned humanists of Paris would still have been speaking about Erasmus as "not without celebrity" in this following year.[32] Our reconstruction has the advantage of allowing Colet much of 1495 and part or even all of 1496 in Italy and perhaps in Florence; since his visit to Paris on his way home, where he found the "learned" talking about Erasmus, probably occurred just before he returned to England in about the summer of 1497. This would leave him time for the short stay with his parents which Erasmus mentions in his Life before "preferring to reside at Oxford" beginning with the fall term of 1497.[33] If we are correct, Colet's first private expositions on Romans to his humanistic friends at Oxford began as soon as he arrived back there in 1497.[34] This would follow naturally from the fact that during 1495 and/or 1496 he had heard or read Ficino's own lectures on the Pauline Epistles, which were given at Florence "during the last years of his life" before his death in 1499.

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[32] The all-important sentence for this question occurs in Colet's first letter to Erasmus in the fall of 1499: "Parrhisiis quando eram, Erasmus in ore doctorum non est incelebris." Ibid., lines 3-4. This is the only reference we have been able to find of Colet's having been in Paris. He also studied at the University of Orléans, a center noted for Canon Law, probably at about this same time; although this is not certain. See John Colet, Two Treatises on the Hierarchies of Dionysius (hereafter, Two Hierarchies), ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1869), p. xviii.

[33] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 281-82.

[34] See Chapter 4 below.

Colet and Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

I. Marsilio Ficino

In future chapters we will discuss at length both the nature of Colet's Oxford lectures on St. Paul and also the nature and development of his interest in Platonism.[35] Here we will concentrate solely on his probable relationship with Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. We argue, then, that Colet began his study of Ficino's writings by reading first his *Platonis opera* (published 1484) and then his translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus (published 1492) while he was still studying philosophy at Oxford. Since he appears to have been in Rome by the end of 1492 or the beginning of 1493, we assume that he left for Italy soon after his "not merely cursive study" of Ficino's Plotinus in 1492.[36] Erasmus tells us that while Colet was abroad he studied only the *sacri autores*. Erasmus may not be totally accurate about this; but in any case Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* and translations of the works of Dionysius were in fact "sacred," that is theological, works. We believe, however, that Colet probably at least began his reading of the *Theologia Platonica* (published 1482) as part of his philosophical reading before he left Oxford in late 1492; since this work is a philosophical theology strongly influenced by Platonism. If we are correct, Colet after this time continued to buy the works of Ficino as soon as they were published, or read them in manuscript. Thus it seems to us very probable that while in Italy Colet read Ficino's Latin translation and commentary on the Mystic Theology and the Divine Names of Dionysius which, although it was not published until 1496, had been dedicated by Ficino to Cardinal Giovanni Medici as early as 1492.[37] In our reconstruction, Colet either read a manuscript of this work sometime between 1492 and 1496, before its publication or he read the published edition in Italy as soon as it came out in 1496. In any case, if we are right about his having been in Florence in later 1495 or 1496 he would have known about this work before its publication. However this may be, it seems to us probable that Colet bought his copy of Ficino's Epistolae in Italy soon after their publication in February 1495, whether he had acquired his translations of the Mystical Theology and Divine Names yet or not. The Epistolae contain much correspondence about the Theologia Platonica and Ficino's other earlier writings.[38] It is probable that his first letter to Ficino, now lost, was written before the appearance of the Epistolae because otherwise we might expect that too to have been drafted in Colet's copy of this book. The second and only surviving letter from Colet to Ficino, which was composed on a back flyleaf of his copy of the Epistolae, was evidently written before Colet had read thoroughly and annotated with his copious marginalia his copy; for Sears Jayne has noted in these marginalia a growing impatience with Ficino on the part of Colet which contrasts strongly with the fulsome praise of him in the extant draft letter.[39]

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[35] See Chapters 4 and 6 below.

[36] See Allen, IV, pp. 514-15, lines 263-70.

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[37] The title page of this work reads, "Marsilius Ficinus Florentinus Reverendo in Christo Patri Domino Joanni Medici Cardinali suppliciter se commendat. 1492. Dionysii Areopagitae librorum de mystica theologia et de divinis nominibus translatio et commentaria: Impressum Florentiae per Laurentium Francisci Venetum (1496)." See A. Chevallier, ed. Dionysiaca, I, pp. XXII-XXIII.

[38] Cf. Jayne, Colet and Ficino, p. 5.

It is therefore our view that soon after he bought Ficino's Epistolae in 1495 but before he had thoroughly read and annotated the book, Colet continued his correspondence with Ficino, and then went to Florence and heard him, or at least read in manuscript his lectures on St. Paul. We believe that this took place in 1495 and/or 1496. In one of these two years, but unquestionably later than September 30, 1495, he visited Paris, perhaps on his way back to England. Almost immediately after his return home he left London for Oxford and began his Pauline expositions with Romans (the only Epistle upon which a fragment of Ficino's lectures survives) at sometime between the fall of 1496 and the fall of 1497, depending upon the exact meaning of Erasmus' statement in the autumn of 1499 that Colet had been lecturing there on the Pauline Epistles "iam triennium enarranti" when he himself was at Oxford.[40]

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[39] Jayne, Colet and Ficino, pp. 50-55.

[40] Allen, I, ep. 108, p. 248, lines 67-68. Triennium means "a space of three years" in classical Latin. Erasmus may well have meant that Colet's expository lectures on the Pauline Epistles were by October 1499 now in their third year. This would be the case if Colet began his lectures in the Michaelmas term (i.e., October), 1497. Our view is supported by the fact that Colet had clearly only just begun his lectures when he wrote to Richard Kidderminster in the winter explaining his method of expounding Romans 1 to a visiting

But there is question about the fact that Colet paraphrases Ficino's Theologia Platonica directly in his Enarratio on Romans which we will show in the next chapter to have been the first of his Oxford lectures. He also paraphrases the Florentine's De raptu Pauli from Epistolae familiares in his own exposition of the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius.[41] In the course of his Enarratio in epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos Colet discusses St. Paul's hymn to love in Romans 8:31-39. Commenting on Romans 8:35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?", Colet introduces a long paraphrase of Ficino's treatment of love in his Platonic Theology with the following words:

> To what extent our return of love and charity to God and his Christ is more profitable to us than anything else appears plainly from the words of the Platonist Marsilio Ficino concerning God's love. They are found in Book XIV of his Platonic Theology, and are in main as follows . . . [42]

After paraphrasing a long passage which shows clearly that he compares St. Paul's doctrine of love and charity with those of Ficino and St. Augustine, Colet explains his method of paraphrasing Ficino as follows:

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priest who has been a faithful auditor of his exposition of the Pauline Epistles. But Colet refers to this visiting priest as consacerdos or fellow priest with himself and Kidderminster. Since Colet was not priested until March 1497/98, this letter was probably written in the late winter of 1497/98 or the winter of 1498/99. This indicates that Colet's public expositions of Paul began in 1497. Cf. Knight, op. cit., pp. 265-68 for Colet's full letter to Abbot Kidderminster in the original Latin.

[41] Cf. Lupton, Two Hierarchies, p. 36, note 1; Jayne, op. cit., p. 146.

[42] Enarr. Rom., c.8, trans. Lupton, p. 29.

> I have related this passage concerning the excellency of love following Marsilius; but I have, however, used in the main my own words just as I pleased and also my own style of writing. I do not do this because I dream that I can express anything more fittingly or clearly than Marsilius, whose language is the finest in philosophy; but because in freedom of speech I have taken the liberty to insert what I myself wanted to in the course of my writing and of giving the turn to the passage which is best suited to my purpose. 43

Thus as early as his enarratio on Romans of 1497-1498, Colet demonstrates both his unquestioned philosophical debt to Ficino, and yet also shows that he treats the Theologia Platonica in a way which foreshadows the growing annoyance he expresses regarding the Epistolae in his marginalia and his attack upon all heathen philosophy in his exposition of I Corinthians. Colet shows here, furthermore, that he is already taking considerable liberty in interpreting Ficino's thought to suit his own purpose, which is single-mindedly directed toward the exposition of the thought of his favorite Apostle, Paul.

A further use of Ficino's works in Colet's theological commentaries occurs in the tract which he wrote on the angels which derives from the Celestial Hierarchy of the Pseudo-Dionysius. J. H. Lupton published this tract as a "supplementary chapter" at the end of Colet's longer commentary on this work; but it might just as well be an earlier commentary, as this work was later superseded by the larger commentary. Lupton was also the first to show that a passage from this tract closely paraphrases a similar passage in Ficino's De raptu Pauli in his Epistolae; and the two passages in question have been printed in parallel columns

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43. Ibid., p. 32.

by Sears Jayne.[44] What is especially significant about this paraphrase is that it shows that Colet followed Ficino in believing that Dionysius' account of the nine angelic hierarchies in his De caelestia hierarchia was a report of St. Paul's mystical experience in the third heaven described in II Cor. 12: 1-4. Here is yet another indication that Colet originally came to his special study of Dionysius through his reading of the successive works of Ficino soon after their publication.

II. Pico della Mirandola

In his commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius and in one of his letter to Radulphus regarding the correct interpretation of the story of the Creation in Genesis 1, Colet also paraphrases two works of another member of the Platonic Academy at Florence-- the Oratio de dignitate hominis, or possibly the Apologia and the Heptaplus.

In Chapter 5 of Colet's commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, which he read in the translation by Ambrosius Traversarius edited in 1499 by Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples, Colet paraphrases a long passage which occurs both in Pico's Apology or explanation of his 900 Theses of 1486; and again in his Oration on the Dignity of Man which was not published until after his death in 1492. In this first case, Colet does not say that he is paraphrasing Pico, but all the same, the passage is practically a verbal transcription from the De homine. The passage shows that Colet like Reuchlin acquired his interest in the Jewish Cabala or Tradition from Pico. But Colet's interest in the Cabala is characteristically as an authority to support his belief that a similar Christian oral or mystical tradition supplements the written Bible as divine revelation; because it too derives originally from Christ and the Apostles. According to Colet, this oral and mystical Christian Tradition was essentially written down by the Pseudo-Dionysius in his work, in just the same way that Pico in his Oration on the Dignity of Man holds that the apocryphal inter-testamental books of Esdras are the written form of the ancient Jewish tradition (Cabala), which was handed down from Moses as a secret or mystical teaching known only to a few Jewish wise men. Colet's interpretation of the role of the oral Christian tradition as a source of revelation can thus be traced directly to Pico della Mirandola.[45]

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[44] Jayne, p. 147.

In the second of his epistles to an otherwise unknown correspondent whom he addresses as Ralph, which seem to date from after 1505 when Colet became Dean of St. Paul's, he also makes use of Pico's Heptaplus, in which he too had discussed the seven days of Creation of Gen. 1:1-2:3. Here Colet does not entirely follow Pico; so that the four "worlds" into which he divides the created universe are somewhat different from Pico's four. He writes:

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45. Cf. Ioannes Colet In Ecclesiasticam Divi Dionisii Hierarchiam (hereafter In Eccl. Hier.), c. 5, 1, in John Colet, Two Treatises on the Hierarchies of Dionysius, ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1869), pp. 109-111.

> Let me first divide the whole universe, as is done by the Platonist [sic] Mirandola in his Hexameron, into four worlds. The first of these worlds is God himself, the World of Worlds; and I call Him the divine world. The second world is the angelic world, consisting of the bright choir of the angels. Thirdly comes the heavenly world which is composed of the everlasting [physical] orbs. The fourth and last world is the human world, which is the whole sublunary region and may be termed the earthly world. 46

Colet and Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples (Faber Stapulensis)

We finish this chapter by explaining why Colet must have used Lefèvre D'Étaples' edition of the Celestial Hierarchy of the Pseudo-Dionysius when he wrote his commentary on this work; and we may presume that he used the same edition for his longer commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy also. Lefèvre's edition of the two Hierarchies was published in Paris on February 6, 1498/1499; and his use of this edition may perhaps indicate that Colet had been in contact with Lefèvre during the same stay in Paris between 1495 and 1497 when he found the learned humanists there discussing Erasmus' dedicatory epistle to Gaguin. This edition which Lefèvre entitled Theologia vivificans; Cibus solidus was in fact a new edition of

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46. Scripta Ioannis Colet, Professoris Theologiae, Decani Sancti Pauli London: In Principium Genesios, in John Colet, Opuscula quaedam theologica, ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1876), ep. 2, p. 10. Lupton does not give his reasons for dating these letters to Radulphus (Ralph) from the period of Colet's Deanship; however, like the rest of MS. 355 in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, they were copied by the one-eyed Brabantine scribe Peter Meghen, who does not seem to have been Colet's scribe until after he became Dean in 1505. However, the letters could have been copied quite a long time after they were written.

the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies and other works of the Pseudo-Dionysius which had been made from the Greek by the Florentine humanist Ambrosius Traversarius as early as the 1430's. Eugene Rice has recently shown that in his own commentary of the Celestial Hierarchy Colet quotes directly from Lefèvre's own scolia on chapter 7 of this work.[47] Thus once again we find that Colet relied upon the latest humanist printed works in preparing his theological commentaries. Although in his enarratio on I Corinthians Colet attacks all "heathen philosophers" (and therefore Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus) and tells Christians to derive all their wisdom and knowledge from the "admirably stocked banquet" of Holy Scriptures alone, he nevertheless continued to depend upon the mystical theology of Dionysius until near his death. The explanation of this fact is that, like Lefèvre, Colet treated Dionysius as the earliest Christian Father rather than as a Platonic philosopher. Not only does Colet actually call Dionysius St. Paul's disciple, but Erasmus in his Life also makes clear that Colet treated the Pseudo-Areopagite as an early Church Father rather than a Platonist philosopher.[48]

We will treat the nature of Colet's Pauline lectures at Oxford and the nature and development of his Platonism in later chapters. Here we will only point out that by the time Colet came to write his enarratio on I Corinthians he would exhort his readers "Do not become readers of the philosophers, the companions of devils," for "in the choice and well-stocked table of Holy Scripture everything is contained which appertains to the truth."[49] It is clear that Colet has turned away from his previous interest in the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus by the time that he wrote these words.[50] We agree with Sears Jayne that this was because he came to realize the effects of Ficino's paganizing ideas upon Christian theology. We see here first in Colet, as later in Erasmus and Lefèvre D'Étaples, that turn away from the paganizing side of humanism toward an interest in the use of humanistic tools and methodology for the study of the Bible and its interpretation by the Church Fathers. Erasmus tells us that in the case of Colet this development occurred as early as his period abroad between 1492 and 1496. Colet seems thus to have been the earliest case in which a theologian with humanist interests used the new methods of the studia humanitatis exclusively with a view to reestablishing "the old and true" biblical theology in defiance of an artificial scholastic exegesis. He therefore seems to have been the first humanist who came to limit his study to the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. In this respect he foreshadowed the later work of his friend Erasmus.[51]

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[47] Cf. E. F. Rice, Review of Sears Jayne, Colet and Ficino, in Renaissance News, 17 (1964), pp. 107-110; and Lupton, Two Hierarchies, pp. 18, 21. For the full title and colophon of Lefèvre's Theologia vivificans . . ., see Chevallier, et al., eds. Dionysiaca, I, p. XXIII.

[48] Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 515; 521.

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[49] Ioannis Coleti . . . Enarratio in Epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios (hereafter Enarr. I Cor.) in John Colet, An Exposition of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1874), p. 110.

[50] It therefore seems to us probable that the final form of Enarr. I Cor. postdates the fall of 1499; since on December 5 of that year Erasmus wrote Robert Fisher, "Coletum meum cum audio, Platonem ipsum mihi videor audire." Allen, I, ep. 118, p. 273. This certainly implies that Colet still seemed a Platonist to Erasmus at this time.

In the following chapter we will examine the origin and nature of Colet's Oxford lectures on the Pauline Epistles and the way in which he used the methods of the studia humanitatis to establish "the old and true theology," of which Erasmus in 1499 called him the "liberator and saviour."[52]

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[51] See Chapter 5 below in which we discuss in detail Colet's influence upon the direction of Erasmus' intellectual life in 1499. In this dissertation we will not be able to discuss the influence which we believe that Erasmus' work had on Luther's developing biblical theology between about 1516 and 1521. We think that it was through Erasmus that Colet's humanistic Paulinism began to affect Luther and eventually Zwingli, Bucer, and Calvin. Luther's friend Spalatin was a tremendous admirer of Erasmus and induced Frederick the Wise to buy all of Erasmus' publications as soon as they came out after 1515 and place them in the library at Wittenburg, where Luther and the other professors at the University had easy access to them. These included the Lucubratiunculae and, most importantly, the Novum Instrumentum of 1516 and the Annotationes in Novum Testamentum, in which Erasmus comments on the Pauline Epistles, quotes Colet, and was influenced by certain of his ideas. The Lucubratiunculae contain Colet's letter to Erasmus on the subject of biblical exegesis. Cf. P. Smith, Erasmus (New York, Dover Books, 1962), pp. 213-14; and Allen, II, ep. 501, p. 417.

[52] Cf. Allen, I, ep. 116, p. 268, lines 12-13; cf. ibid., ep. 108, p. 247, lines 55-62.

Chapter Four

COLET'S OXFORD LECTURES ON THE PAULINE EPISTLES AND THEIR ROLE IN HIS PROGRAM FOR THE REFORM OF THE CHURCH

The Origins and Intention of Colet's Oxford Lectures on St. Paul.

We will now show that internal evidence from Colet's own Oxford *enarratio* on *Romans* supports Erasmus' clear statement in his letter to Jonas in showing that Sears Jayne is wrong in his contention that Colet's Oxford *lectiones* on the Pauline Epistles were delivered in order to complete the requirements for the B. Th. degree.[1] These lectures were rather the continuation of Colet's earlier study of the *sacri autores . . . veteres*, his humanistic preparation for a life of preaching the Gospel to both laity and clergy as a secular priest.[2] It was no chance that Colet was ordained to the successive major orders

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[1] See again our Appendix I which together with this entire dissertation demonstrates with possibly the single exception of one sentence the accuracy of Erasmus' biography of Colet in his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 507-508; 514-527.

[2] Cf. Erasmus' statements about Colet's studies in England and abroad before returning to Oxford in Allen, IV, pp. 514-515, lines 270-295, esp. lines 279-280, 285-286; p. 516, lines 293-306; and ep. 1224 to Lupset, pp. 569-570. Also More's letter to Colet of October 23 (1504) in Rogers, *Correspondence of More*, ep. 3, pp. 5-9.

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of deacon and priest respectively on December 17, 1497 and March 25, 1497/98 just after he began his Pauline lectures at Oxford with Romans in either 1496 or 1497.[3]

In opposition to the views of both J. H. Lupton and Sears Jayne we contend that Colet's extant *enarratio* on the Epistle to the Romans was in reality the very first of his series of Oxford lectures on the entire New Testament canon of the Pauline Epistles in the

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[3] Colet was already an acolyte in minor orders by August 6, 1485, when at the age of seventeen or eighteen he was made Rector of Dennington, Suffolk, through his family's influence. The dates of his ordinations to the diaconate and priesthood are given in Knight, pp. 18-20 and A. B. Emden, ed., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-59), I, p. 463. Consequently Colet's letter to Richard Kidderminster, Abbot of Winchcombe, describing the partially scholastic and partially humanist method in which he exegeted Rom. 1 in his lectures was written later than March 25, 1497-98; since he refers in it to a visiting priest who had come to love St. Paul's Epistles through these lectures as *consacerdos*. "Joannes Coletus Abbati Winchincombensi. Erat mecum heri vesperi (reverende pater) consacerdos quidam, homo bonus et doctus; et Pauli diligens auditor, et ipsius etiam intime cognoscendi cupientissimus." Knight, p. 265. This letter was almost certainly written before Erasmus' arrival in Oxford in the late summer or autumn of 1499, because in it Colet describes in detail for the Abbot of Winchcombe monastery near Oxford the approach that he was taking in his exposition of St. Paul. But by the time that Erasmus arrived in Oxford Colet's lectures had become immensely popular and were being attended by the abbots of all the nearby monasteries, who were bringing their texts of the Pauline Epistles and annotating them from Colet's exposition. One of these abbots was surely Kidderminster of Winchcombe, which was at the foot of the Cotswold hills not far from Oxford.

Vulgate version. If we consider the extremely orderly nature of Colet's mind[4], clearly evident throughout his theological writings, we would in any case expect that his Oxford lectures on Paul would follow the order of the Apostle's Epistles in the New Testament canon in which the letter addressed to the Church at Rome comes first. However, our view is supported by much stronger evidence from within the enarratio on Romans itself.

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[4] The extreme concern for both canon law and theological order throughout Colet's writings has been noted by Lupton, who suggests with justice that Colet's mind was perhaps too orderly. This extreme concern for law, order, and hierarchy in all matters connected with the Church no doubt played an important part in attracting Colet to the thought of the Dionysius in the first place; and would have made him unwilling to admit the pseudonymous nature of the writings of this supposed direct disciple of St. Paul and Apostolic Father. Since the Dionysian writings were considered the earliest authority for the Catholic understanding the Church as the ecclesiastical hierarchy, we can see how belief in the authenticity of his writings was supported by most Catholic polemicists against Protestantism during the sixteenth century and later. As late as 1517 Colet still based his appeal to Erasmus to follow the "short way" to the imitation of Jesus on the threefold mystic way of purgation, illumination, and deification, which runs through the corpus Dionysiacum. Cf. Allen, II, ep. 593, p. 599, lines 15-21.

At the end of his exposition of chapter 11 in his Oxford *enarratio* on *Romans*[5], Colet follows the fashion of the Italian humanists in his description for posterity of the manner in which he had originally begun his Oxford lectures on this Epistle. After completing his exposition of Rom. 11:33-36, Paul's peroration and prayer which complete the eleventh chapter of the Epistle, Colet originally brought his commentary to a close with the following words:

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[5] Colet's *Enarratio in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos* (hereafter *Enarr. Rom.*), ed. and trans. J. H. Lupton (London, 1873). This *enarratio on Romans* is in fact the only one of Colet's three surviving expositions of the Pauline Epistles unquestionably written and delivered at Oxford; since it alone is signed "Oxoniae" at the end. *Enarr. Rom.*, c. 16, p. 227. Colet's *Enarratio in Epistolam Primam S. Pauli ad Corinthios* (hereafter *Enarr. I Cor.*), ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1874) probably represents the final form of his lectures at Oxford on this Epistle by the time of his death; although this is not absolutely certain. The *Scripta Ioannis Colet Professoris Theologiae in Epistolam Divi Pauli ad Romanos* (hereafter *Script. Rom.*) were written after he became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in about May, 1504. Cf. Ioannis Coleti *Opuscula quaedam theologica*, ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1876), p. 204, where this exposition is subtitled *Commentaria in Divum Paulum Ioannis Colet Decani Sancti Pauli*. This subtitle is in the hand of Colet's Brabantine scribe, Peter Meghen, like the rest of this commentary; the manuscript of which is in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. We therefore see no reason to accept Sears Jayne's statement that the heading is inaccurate because "it dates from a much later time" than the manuscript. (Jayne, *op. cit.*, p. 27, note 1). Neither do we accept Jayne's consequent argument that this was in reality Colet's "First Commentary on Romans (i to v)" delivered at Oxford from January, 1498. (*ibid.*, pp. 26-37). Jayne refers to Meghen's work as "only a copy of an earlier manuscript"; but Meghen in fact copied Erasmus' Latin translations of the New Testament (except Acts and Revelation) at Colet's direction during the years 1506 and 1509. Cf. Allen, I, ep. 231, p. 471, note to line 4, and II, p. 182. Meghen was Colet's regular scribe and would not have written a mistaken heading to the *Scripta ad Romanos*.

> Thus I have brought down to the present point the exposition which I undertook to write on this portion alone of the Epistle to the Romans . . . For my exposition has certainly grown to a far greater length than I had originally intended. But the mixture of conciseness and condensed richness in St. Paul forced me to undertake a fuller explanation . . . For so great is the treasure and so abundant the store of wisdom and divinity hidden in the Apostle's language that however great an amount one may have quarried . . . from this mine, there will always be an inexhaustible remainder of divine wisdom to be brought to light by some wiser man.
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> As for the contribution . . . which I myself have made to this subject; although I have not written so much for others as for myself, nevertheless should these comments of mine . . . fall at any time into the hands of others I pray them to be kindly in their consideration of whatever they read in them.[6]

However, at the very beginning of the resumed portion of the commentary which he says he began sometime after this, Colet makes clear that what had originally been his private exposition of Romans has now begun to develop into the celebrated Oxford lectures on all the Pauline Epistles. The opening words of the resumed commentary show once again that he was not expounding the Epistle in order to attain a theological degree, as Jayne maintains following Anthony Wood and

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[6] Enarr. Rom., c. 11, p. 174. Colet uses very similar language about mining the treasure of St. Paul's divine wisdom in his letter to Richard Kidderminster describing his approach to Rom. 1. Cf. Lupton, Life of Colet, pp. 91-92.

A. B. Emden.[7] When he wrote that he had originally intended his *enarratio* on *Romans* principally for his own private use Colet evidently meant that he intended to use it as an aid to his future preaching from the Epistle, since we know from Erasmus that after he became Dean of St. Paul's he did in fact preach series of sermons which expounded whole Epistles and Gospels of the New Testament from beginning to end. We also know that before December 1504 and probably as early as 1499 Colet had written commentaries on the Gospels as well as on the Pauline Epistles, since Erasmus wrote at that time that he was surprised they were not published.[8] However, it was a cardinal point with Colet, derived from the Neoplatonic emanationalist theology of St. Paul's supposed disciple the Pseudo-Dionysius, that the true Christian imitates so far as he can God's overflowing goodness by striving to the utmost of his ability to endow his neighbor with whatever grace he has himself received from God. And in so doing he both follows Christ's statement in *Acts* that it is more blessed to give than to receive and imitates to the best of his ability God's basic nature, which according to the Latin Dionysius was that of bonum diffusivum sui.[9]

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[7] Cf. Jayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16 and *passim*. Jayne seems to build his entire argument regarding the real intention of Colet's Oxford lectures on Paul on the fact that Emden in his *Biographical Register of Oxford*, vol. I, p. 463, states that Colet received the B. Th. degree from the University in 1501. But Emden is following uncritically the conjecture made by Anthony Wood in his *Fasti* of Oxford University. See Allen, I, p. 404. Erasmus' account of Colet's intentions is more reliable than that of the not always accurate Wood, who did not write until the seventeenth century.

[8] Cf. Allen, IV, p. 516, lines 301-306. That Colet had written commentaries on at least some of the Gospels before he left for London in 1503 or 1504 is shown by the following statement in Erasmus' letter to Colet of about December 1504 congratulating him on having become a Doctor of Theology and Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. "Miror nihildum tuarum commentationum in Paulum *atque in Euangelia* prodiisse in lucem." Allen, I, ep. 181, p. 404, lines 15-16. My italics.

Moreover, when "after a long time", as Colet himself says, he resumed his commentary on Romans so as to complete his exposition by treating the last five chapters of the Epistle (caps. xii-xvi), he gives an explicit explanation of exactly why he did so. He makes clear here that what had begun as basically a private exposition intended primarily for himself alone has now grown into a series of lectures which "certain friends" who have been "faithful auditors of my exposition" have in the meantime been badgering him against his will to continue beyond the end of Chapter 11 to the end of the Epistle. We will quote the words with which Colet resumed his enarratio immediately following the word "finis" at the original ending of his commentary.

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[9] The Christian Neoplatonist view of Dionysius that the infinite fecundity of the divine goodness constantly overflows or emanates as grace throughout the created cosmos is incorporated in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas under this phrase bonum diffusivum sui. Under the influence of especially Dionysius and Augustine, this Neoplatonic view of God's essential nature as goodness constantly emanating into the world was characteristic of all Western theology in the Middle Ages. Cf. A. O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), pp. 67-98, who describes the conflicts that it caused in medieval thought.

> Although I had made a personal decision that I would not continue my exposition of this Epistle of the divine Paul to the Romans beyond what I have lately delivered . . . Nevertheless, because I have for a long time been continually asked to do so by certain friends who had become faithful auditors of my interpretation of St. Paul (and to whom as I was bound to do through friendship I had communicated what I had written on the first part of the Epistle), I was finally induced to promise that I would continue what I had begun and would apply my exposition to the rest of the Epistle.[10]

When we read these two successive statements of Colet together with the description of his method of exposition of Romans 1 which he gives in a letter written in 1498 or 1499 to Richard Kidderminster, Abbot of Winchcombe, we see the real reason why Colet decided to give free lectures on the entire Vulgate New Testament canon of the Pauline Epistles from soon after his return from France and Italy in late 1495 or 1496 until about 1504. Then Henry VII personally promoted him to be Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, because of his especial love of the Epistles of the Apostle to whom the premier Cathedral of

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[10] "At quanquam decreverim mecum non enarraturum me plus in hanc epistolam a divo Paulo ad Romanos scriptam et productum ad eum usque locum . . . tamen certe multum ac diu rogatus a quibusdam amicis, et eiisdem interpretantibus nobis Paulum fidis auditoribus, quibuscum pro amicicia quod in superiorem epistolae partem scriptum est a nobis communicavi, adductus fui tandem ut promitterem . . . et in reliquam epistolam quod reliquum est enarrationis adhibiturum." Enarr. Rom., c. 11, p. 175; tr. pp. 57-58.

England was dedicated.[11] In agreement with the statement of Erasmus in his letter to Jonas, Colet's originally private expositions of the Pauline Epistles were in their origin a continuation of that elaborate preparation for the correct preaching of the Gospel from the Vulgate Bible as a revival of "that old and true theology", of which Erasmus said in 1499 Colet had been already for three years "the vindicator and asserter."[12] This was the manner in which by 1499 when Erasmus first arrived in England Colet had already for three years been striving to reform theology in accordance with the Catholic ideal of the early Fathers; and it would be the way that he would continue through his preaching throughout his life. We have already seen that even before Colet followed his Oxford predecessors in study abroad in about 1492 he had already begun to make at Oxford a careful study of not only Cicero, Plato and Plotinus but also the ancient *sacri autores* or Church Fathers, Dionysius, Jerome, and Augustine.[13] Erasmus' description of Colet's early career in 1521, together with other evidence, makes clear that his prolonged period of study abroad was yet another example of that tradition which we saw developing as the fifteenth century progressed whereby Oxonian clerics with the traditional scholastic training but with a taste for the *studia humanitatis* visited Italy in order to study at the center of both the dominant contemporary European culture (humanism) and also the center of the Catholic Church at Rome.[14] The important difference between Colet and earlier Oxford-educated travellers to Italy was that at some early point in his career he had decided to dedicate his humane learning to preaching and ecclesiastical reform,rather than like his more typical privileged predecessors to use the humane learning acquired on the Continent as a ladder to promotion in the royal service and the Church.

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[11] "From these sacred labours of lecturing on the Pauline Epistles at Oxford Colet was recalled to London by the favour of King Henry VII and was made Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, in order that he might preside over the college [of Canons] of that Apostle whose writings he loved so much." Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 516, lines 293-95. Colet was not actually installed as Dean until about May 5, 1505; but it seems clear that he had been Acting Dean since 1504 or even 1503 in place of his predecessor, Robert Sherbourne, who was away from London from 1503 on royal diplomatic business, in the characteristic manner of many of the upper clergy of this period. See Lupton, Life, p. 120, note 4. On October 23, 1504, Thomas More wrote Colet saying that he and other laymen were missing Colet's excellent preaching and moral example during his absence from the pulpit of his church at Stepney outside London. Cf. E. F. Rogers, ed., Correspondence of More, ep. 3, pp. 7-8, lines 35-63, and The Selected Letters of St. Thomas More (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), ep. 2, pp. 5-6.

[12] See Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 279-80 and 268-70. Also I, ep. 108, p. 247, lines 56-57 and ep. 116, p. 268, lines 12-13.

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[13] Allen, IV, pp. 514-15, lines 265-73.

[14] Cf. G. B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy* (Stanford, 1954), I, pp. 423-494. We can see how important the good, if lukewarm, relations between the English kings of all three dynasties and the papacy were for the development of English humanism during this period,which culminated in Biblical studies with the work of Colet and,in part through his encouragement, that of Erasmus. Their relationship is treated in Chapter 5 below.

It is significant that this older tradition is represented by both Colet's predecessor as Dean of St. Paul's, Robert Sherbourne, and his successor, Richard Pace. Erasmus' letter to Jonas makes clear that Colet's interest in the *studia humanitatis* had already turned to the *sacrae literae veteres* at Oxford even before he left for Italy in about 1492. Even more exclusively than the earlier theologically trained English humanists, he had restricted himself while abroad entirely to ancient *sacred* literature; and he used his foreign studies first in making a fresh approach to the exposition of the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels of the Latin Vulgate at Oxford in order to restore "that old and true theology" there, and later in his biblical preaching from the New Testament Gospel in London.[15] This all-important influence of Renaissance humanism on Colet is also shown in his extremely wide interest in almost every aspect of contemporary humane learning,[16] as well as his use of the humane arts of history, rhetoric, and "poetry" (although seldom grammar) in his attempt to understand the historical Paul and his epistolary correspondence with the apostolic churches. Thus in Colet the humane studies which had been developed in Italy during the *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* primarily for the study of the *prisci auctores seculares* are applied to the Vulgate Bible of the Western Church for the explicit purpose of reforming theological education by ignoring the exegetical theology of a declining scholasticism, and an attempt to return to the biblical and patristic theology of the early Western Church. If Erasmus' biography of Colet in his letter to Jonas is read in its proper context along with Colet's own statements in his Oxford *enarratio* on *Romans* and his letter to Kidderminster, and the continuously homiletic methodology in his Pauline expositions is considered in the context of his entire career, this fact becomes obvious; especially when we take into account the continuing development of Italian humanism upon Oxford theology during the course of the fifteenth century.

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[15] Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1942), pp. 349-364, who shows that medieval scholastic exegesis was originally intended for preaching, so that biblical lectures at Paris and Oxford were homiletic. Colet was attempting to revivify this earlier medieval tradition which had declined after the thirteenth century, during which scholastic theology became increasingly specialized and cut off from the ground of biblical revelation.

[16] Erasmus' biography describes Colet's extremely broad interest in every aspect of contemporary humane learning coupled with his overriding concern to use it entirely in the service of preaching the Gospel and the reform of the disastrous conditions of the late medieval Church. Allen, IV, pp. 514-17, lines 263-322. Erasmus does not, however, mention Colet's strong interest in medicine, which is evident from the frequent medical analogies in his theological writings. But see Erasmus' statement in Allen, IV, p. 519, lines 378-83, from which it is apparent that Colet asked for an autopsy to be made of his body after his death, possibly by Thomas Linacre.

It has become clear, therefore, that with Colet's Pauline lectures the development of Oxford humanism has reached the point at which it is applied to the Vulgate texts of the Pauline Epistles in the form in which they were regularly used in the liturgy of the Catholic Church of the West. Erasmus' letters both of 1499 and his *Life of Colet* of 1521 also make clear that Colet had begun his study at Oxford by following the traditional scholastic training toward the graduate faculty of theology, the "queen of the disciplines." However, as we have already seen, the Oxford faculties of Arts and Philosophy, as well as that of Theology, had become increasingly influenced by the methods and content of the Italian *studia humanitatis* by the ninth decade of the fifteenth century when Colet entered the University. In his study of rhetoric, the second art of the *trivium* as well as one of the humane disciplines, Erasmus tells us that Colet had made a thorough study of Cicero, the favorite ancient orator of the Italian Renaissance. In philosophy he had made special studies of both Plato and Plotinus as well as of the traditional Latin Aristotle. Since Colet did not have a very profound knowledge of Greek, his study of Plato and his follower, Plotinus, must almost certainly have been in the recent Latin translations of the complete works of these authors published by Ficino in 1484 and 1492 respectively.[17] Colet had again followed the traditional order of the Oxford scholastic *curriculum* in his progress from philosophy to theology, but he was also influenced by humanism in his approach to "that theology which is the queen of all the disciplines " or "that old and true theology."[18] It is important to note that Erasmus says Colet had begun his study of the *sacri autores* Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine even before he left for France and

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[17] See Jayne, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[18] These phrases are used by Erasmus in a letter to Colet of about October, 1499. Cf. Allen I, ep. 108, p. 247, lines 28-33; 56-62; and also *ibid.* ep. 116 (of about November, 1499), p. 268, lines 12-13, where Erasmus refers to Colet at this same time as "veteris illius theologiae vindex atque assertor."

Italy, and that while he was abroad he gave himself over completely to this study of the sacred rather than the secular ancient writers. Erasmus significantly adds that although Colet had also made a full study of the traditional scholastic theologians Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas and "others of this type", he came to dislike them, especially Aquinas; because he felt that they confused their worldly philosophy (prophana philosophia) with the sacred wisdom of the original sources of theology, the Bible and the Church Fathers.[19] But despite the fact that Colet had evidently studied some Greek in Italy, his lack of a thorough knowledge restricted him almost totally to the study of the Latin Vulgate, the Latin Fathers, and Dionysius and Origen, the two Greek Fathers who had been most studied in the West during the Middle Ages in Latin translations.[20] The order in which Erasmus lists the Fathers whom Colet studied in his youth is itself significant; because it represents both what Colet considered to be the chronological order of their antiquity and, therefore, their relative importance as witnesses to the Apostolic Church. In this list, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite is listed as the earliest of the _prisci theologi_ or early Church Fathers. We will later show that Erasmus' _Life_ here gives us an important clue to the correct understanding and ordering of Colet's extant writings and is also corroborated by them. Colet specifically states in his _enarratio_ on _I Corinthians_ that Dionysius was St. Paul's disciple; and in his _De sacramentis ecclesiae_ (written after 1505), in his Convocation Sermon of 1511/1512, and again in 1517, that is, two years before his death, he still shows that he was deeply influenced by the mystical and hierarchical theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius.[21] For, in agreement with almost the entire Middle Ages, Colet believed that the author of the _corpus Dionysicum_ was the Athenian convert and disciple and convert of Paul who is mentioned in Acts 17:32. Colet was well aware because of his use of humanism that a return to the sacred literary sources of the primitive Church, the Bible (especially the New Testament) and the Fathers (the earliest biblical interpreters)was necessary for a genuine renaissance of the "old and true theology." He evidently did not realize until 1516, as Erasmus was to do as early as 1500, the necessity of a knowledge of Greek for this task; probably because of his single-minded dedication to the Latin tradition of the Western Church. It would remain for

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[19] Allen IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 274-275, and p. 520, lines 425-444. Cf. E. L. Surtz, S. J., "The Oxford Reformers and Scholasticism," Studies in Philology, 47 (1950), pp. 547-556.

[20] For Dionysius, see Dom P. Chevallier et al., eds., Dionysiaca, 2 vols. (Paris, 1937-1950), and Lovejoy, op. cit, pp. 67f. For Origen, see J. LeClercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God (New York, 1962), pp. 96-103.

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[21] It seems to us probable that Colet gave his lectures on I Corinthians at Oxford immediately after he completed those on Romans; that is to say, in about 1497 or 1498. For Colet's explicit statement that he believed that Dionysius was the direct disciple of St. Paul, see _Enarr. I Cor._, c. 2, p. 171. It is perhaps significant that explicit expositions by Colet survive on only the first two Epistles of the Pauline canon.

Erasmus, after he had come under the influence of Colet during his English visit of 1499-1500 to comprehend the necessity of Greek for the full study of the Christian fontes, the Greek New Testament and the Greek Fathers.[22]

If Erasmus is correct (and he is the best source that we have), Colet was already becoming dissatisfied with the contemporary Oxford scholastic theology even before he left for further study in France and Italy in about 1492. Erasmus specifically says that Colet limited himself to the study of the early sacred authors (prisci sacri autores) while he was abroad. This phrase does not mean, however, exclusively the biblical authors, as Seebohm thought; but rather the Bible and the early theologians or Church Fathers.[23] Colet had also read, at least, Book XIV of Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* before he wrote his exposition of *Romans*;and sometime after February 1495 he heavily annotated his copy of the *Epistolae familiares*, published in February 1495 by Marsilio Ficino, which treat theological questions from the Platonist point of view. Whatever Colet's original intentions were when he first began to be influenced by the *studia humanitatis* during his earlier study in the Arts and Philosophy faculties at Oxford between about 1483 and 1492, by the time that he left Oxford for Italy he had already decided to apply his humane learning exclusively to theology. Thus by the time of his period of study abroad from about 1492 to late 1495 or 1496,[24] Colet had totally dedicated himself to the study of the Bible and the theologians (sacris autoribus) in preparation for his chosen lifework of preaching the Gospel and his attempt to play a role in bringing about the long-awaited reform of the late medieval Church. Colet's humanist study of the early Fathers, the Canon and Civil Law, History, the English poets and the Vulgate Bible itself, was single-mindedly directed toward improving his ability as a preacher of the Christian Gospel both in Latin ad clerum and in English to the laity. It was in continuation of this preparation and with a view to bringing about a doctrinal and moral reform of the Church by means of the reform of theology that Colet became the "vindicator and asserter of the old theology" whom Erasmus met when he arrived in Oxford in 1499.[25] What had begun as a private exposition of the Epistle to the Romans "written not so much for others as for myself"[26] had grown in three years into popular lectures and a determination to revive the study of the Bible at Oxford University by means of the tools of humanism, in order to bring about the widespread preaching of the true Christian Gospel "drawn from the most pure sources of the Holy Scriptures."

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[22] Erasmus had begun a commentary on Romans shortly after his return to Paris from England in 1500 but had given it up because of his lack of Greek. In December 1504 he wrote Colet that "three years ago I ventured to write something on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and finished in a single effort some four volumes which I would have continued if I had not been hindered, the principle hindrance being my lack of Greek. Consequently, for about three years I have been entirely taken up with the study of this language . . ." Allen, I, ep. 181, pp. 404-405, lines 31-36. On June 20, 1516, after reading the first edition of the Novum Instrumentum, Colet wrote to Erasmus, ". . . I am vexed at not having learnt Greek, without the knowledge of which we are nothing . . ." Allen, II, ep. 423, p. 257, lines 13-15.

[23] Cf. Seebohm, Oxford Reformers, p. 16, wrote "in Italy, the hot-bed of the Neo-Platonists," Colet " gave himself up (we are told) to the study of the Holy Scriptures. " Erasmus' actual words, which Seebohm translates incorrectly, are, "Ibi in Gallia et Italia se totum euoluendis sacris autoribus dedit . . ." (Allen IV, p. 515). By the sacri autores Erasmus clearly means both the biblical writers and the early Church Fathers, and not just the Scriptures alone.

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[24] On March 14, 1493, Colet registered as a member of the *Fraternitas S. Spiritus et S. Mariae in Saxia* at Rome. On April 1 of this year he wrote a letter from Rome to Christopher Urswick, Dean of York and Grand Almoner and close associate of Henry VII,who had been sent in 1492 to Rome as the King's ambassador to the newly elected Pope Alexander VI. On May 3, 1493, Colet registered as a member of the English Hospice at Rome. Cf. P. Egidi, ed., *Fonti per la storia d'Italia pubblicate dall'Istituto Storico Italiano*, Antichita secoli xi-xv (Roma: nella sede d'Istituto, 1908), II, p. 276; W. K. Ferguson, "An Unpublished Letter of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's", *American Historical Review*, *39* (1934), pp. 696-99; V. J. Flynn, "Englishmen at Rome during the Renaissance," *Modern Philology*, *36* (1938), pp. 121-38; and G. B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy* (Stanford, 1954), I, pp. 357-82, 466-67. Colet makes clear his common interest in history in his letter to Urswick, and quotes Cicero as calling it the *magistra vite* and Varro as the *ministra leticie*. The whole letter is strongly influenced by humanism. Cf. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 699.

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[25] "Praesidebat Coletus veteris illius theologiae vindex atque assertor." Erasmus' letter to John Sixtin of about November 1499. Allen I, ep. 116, p. 268, lines 12-13.

[26] Enarr. Rom., c. 11, p. 174.

Colet's Use of the Studia Humanitatis in his Oxford Lectures on the Pauline Epistles.

In assessing the importance of Colet's application of humanist methods in his Oxford lectures on the Pauline Epistles, we must take into account both the earlier attempts which had been made in Italy to apply the *studia humanitatis* to the Bible and also the question of his influence on the biblical and patristic studies of Erasmus. We will end this chapter by showing specific instances of Colet's application of rhetoric, history, poetry and grammar in his Oxford expositions of St. Paul. Both these lectures and the Latin sermon before the Convocation of Canterbury on February 6, 1511/1512 show clearly his pervasive concern that *philosophatio Christiana*, i.e., theology, should be totally practical and moral, that is to say, that the theory of Christian doctrine should never be divorced from the practice of the most perfect life possible to the individual Christian. Colet in fact uses in varying degrees every one of the *studia humanitatis*, grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy in his approach to the Latin New Testament. In the next chapter we will examine in detail Colet's influence on Erasmus, who would carry further this application of the methods of Italian humanism to Christian theology as a program for reform of the Catholic Church through a return to its original sources (*puri fontes*) of truly Christian philosophy, i.e., biblical and patristic theology. Like Colet, Erasmus would stress the fact that the Bible and the Church Fathers never divorce doctrine from the moral life and would maintain that this simple *philosophia Christi* was outstandingly preached and acted upon as an example to others throughout his life by Colet.[27] Colet was thus an important source for the international attempt to reform the Church by the methods of Italian humanism which by the second decade of the sixteenth century had become known as "Erasmianism," and which would strongly influence the entire religious controversy of the sixteenth century. It would also influence the *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism which during the course of this century became characteristic of the *ecclesia Anglicana*.

Before Colet returned from Italy to give his *enarrationes* on the Pauline Epistles at Oxford, humanistic methods had already been applied to the study of the Bible in that country. In about 1450 Lorenzo Valla had in his *Ad Novum Testamentum Adnotationes* made what appears to have been the first attempt at a scientific criticism of the Latin Vulgate. Working from three Latin and three Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, he had pointed out and emended many errors both in the manuscript readings and the Latin translations. Soon after this the humanist Pope Nicholas V had encouraged Gianozzo

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[27] See Erasmus' statement regarding Colet after his death in a letter to Thomas Lupset, of August 23, 1521: "In Coleto praecipuum erat quod synceram Christi philosophiam e purissimis Euangeliorum haustam fontibus gratis impartiit populo . . ." Allen, IV, ep. 1229, p. 569. This cementing together of doctrine and the moral life which, as in the case of Colet, runs through the entire theology of Erasmus and is never divorced from *doctrina* or *dogma*, is termed *philosophatio Christiana* by Colet in *Script. Rom.*, and *philosophia Christi* by Erasmus. Cf. J. K. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 13-43; and J. Guarnaschelli, "Erasmus' Concept of the Church, 1499-1524," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1966.)

Manetti to make a new Latin translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek, and Manetti began although he did not complete this work. He printed the oldest Latin version of the Bible, the "Itala", the Vulgate, and his own new Latin translation in parallel columns and defended the project against the inevitable attacks which he expected from the conservatives.[28] By the last years of the fifteenth century when Colet visited Italy a fairly large number of humanistically trained scholars had come to feel the need of an exegesis of the Bible based upon the new philology instead of the outmoded postulates of scholastic exegesis. It is not known exactly when Ficino began his lectures on the Pauline Epistles from a humanistic viewpoint in the Cathedral of Florence; but it is very likely that Colet knew these in some form. These were all forerunners of Colet's expositions at Oxford beginning in either 1496 or 1497; but we should note that Valla, who was principally a grammarian, was generally considered to be in disgrace by the last years of the fifteenth century. His Adnotationes on New Testament were only printed after they had been found in what appears to be the only surviving manuscript copy; which was discovered by Erasmus at the Premonstratensian monastery of Parc outside Louvain in the fall of 1504.[29] Manetti's work was left unfinished while Ficino's wide-ranging Renaissance interests cause the fragments of his Pauline lectures which survive to embody a very different use of humane studies and ancient philosophy from Colet's single-minded use of the humane arts in order to revive the historical Paul and his original Gospel from his New Testament Epistles. We will now briefly analyze Colet's use three of the humanities, rhetoric, history, and poetry in his attempt to revive the New Testament Gospel in theology.

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[28] Cf. P. Smith, Erasmus: A Study of His Life, Ideals and Place in History (New York, 1923), p. 160f.

[29] Allen, I, ep. 182, pp. 406-412; Smith, loc. cit.

The Use of Rhetoric in Colet's Pauline Expositions

Colet's study of the art of rhetoric is seen in his approach to the language of St. Paul in his Epistles as a sacred orator, who uses the techniques of ancient rhetoric to persuade the churches of Rome and Corinth of the correctness of his interpretation as an Apostle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This approach to St. Paul brought widely different results from the dialectical approach to his Epistles of traditional scholastic theology. For instance, in his exposition of Rom. 9:22, Colet interprets an abruptly ending Pauline sentence as caused by the Apostle's all too human "vehemence of speaking". This caused St. Paul to become unable to finish his sentence in the process of his dictation of the Epistle.[30]

A little afterwards, in his commentary on Chapter 11 of Romans Colet again interprets St. Paul as a sacred orator who by means of his rhetorical art is able to balance his statements in the epistle in such a way that his oration favors neither the Jewish nor the Gentile Christians in the Roman Church at the expense of the opposite faction. Such balance in rhetoric was one of the desiderata aimed for in Renaissance oratory.[31]

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[30] Commenting on Vulgate Rom. 9:22, Colet interprets Paul's statement interrogatively." 'What if God (as St. Paul adds) had been willing to show his wrath and to make his power known?' Let this sentence be read interrogatively and then it is an unfinished and suspended one which arises from the vehemence of the Apostle's language." Enarr. Rom., cc. 9 and 10, p. 168, tr. p. 48.

Colet's Use of the Art of History in his Pauline Expositions.

Even more notable than his use of rhetoric is Colet's use of the art and method of history, another of the Renaissance *studia humanitatis*, to establish the context of Rom. 13. Colet's discussion of the historical context of this Epistle and its chronological relationship to other Pauline Epistles is raised by Paul's statement in Rom. 13:1 regarding the proper attitude of the Christian toward the secular power of the State, that is, the Roman Empire. Colet here attempts to conflate statements in the *Acts of the Apostles* and *Romans* with those concerning the reigns of Claudius, Caligula, and Nero in Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* and other secular and sacred histories. Although Colet places the pivotal date for the chronological reconstruction of St. Paul's ministry (his trial before Festus in *Acts*) four years too early by the standards of modern New Testament scholarship, his chronological placing of *Romans* after *I* and *II Corinthians* and *Galatians* is generally accepted by modern scholars. We will limit ourselves here to the quotation of the paragraph from his commentary on Rom. 13 in which he makes these points with the aid of the art of history in order to show the way that he uses the humanist historical methodology in order to reconstruct the historical facts of St. Paul's life and the historical context of his theology.

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[31] "Ita Paulus mira prudentia et arte temperat orationem suam in hac epistola, et eam quasi librat tam pari lance, et Judeos et Gentes simul . . ." *Ibid.*, c. 11, p. 173; tr. p. 55. Cf. Seebohm, p. 34, and Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *24* (1963), pp. 497-514.

> The Epistle to the Romans was written near the close of the reign of Claudius in about the twentieth year of Paul's ministry. It was also at this time, as I gather both from the histories and from the letters of St. Paul himself, that both of the Epistles to the Corinthians, as well as that to the Galatians, were written. However, this epistle to the Romans was written after those others and not long before Paul's last journey to Jerusalem. For he was imprisoned by Festus, the Governor of Judea, four or five years after the dispatch of these letters, and was sent by him to Rome. That was in the twenty-fifth year after Christ's death and Paul's commission, and in the second year of Nero's reign. After this date Paul survived for twelve more years and taught in Italy and served under Christ's banner until his death, which occurred thirty-seven years after his original conversion. He perished in the first continuous persecution of the Christians under Nero on the same day as St. Peter, in the fourteenth year of that Emperor's reign.[32]

Colet's Use of the Poetic or Mythological Method of Renaissance Humanism in Biblical Interpretation.

A clear instance of Colet's use of the poetic or mythological interpretation of Italian Renaissance humanism, the type which was taught in the highest course of the school of Guarino of Verona at Ferrara, occurs in his interpretation of Genesis 1:14 in the fourth of his surviving letters written to an unknown man named Ralph

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[32] Enarr. Rom., c. 13, pp. 94-95. Colet appears to have drawn his chronology from the Chronicon of Ivo of Chartres, which he cites further on in this commentary on Romans.

(Radulphus) concerning the correct interpretation of the *Genesis* account of the creation of the cosmos. Like everyone else of his day Colet believed that the Pentateuch was entirely written by Moses. However, he accepted the Augustinian doctrine of concreation of all things at once in a single instant, following, like Augustine, the Platonic tradition that successive creation of things would be unworthy of God. He therefore follows the Latin translation of Origen's *Contra Celsum* in treating the *Genesis* account of a successive creation as a holy fiction or myth invented by Moses as a devout poet for the sake of the rustic and uncultivated Jews for whom he wrote the first chapter of *Genesis*.

> But let me come to the actual words of Moses: "And God said,'let there be lights in the firmament of heaven.'" As I have already mentioned, all these things were created simultaneously. For it is unworthy of God . . . to suppose that he made first one thing and then another, as though he could not have made all things at once in a single instant. . . . But like a good and devout poet, as Origen calls him in his treatise against Celsus, Moses decided to invent something to certain degree unworthy of God, because it would be of advantage to man . . . . For all the divine things when delivered to man degenerate from their true nature and take a more sensuous form, which men can comprehend more easily.[33]

In the passage of Rufinus' translation of *Contra Celsum*, I. 19, which Colet evidently has in mind here, Moses is in fact referred to as an *orator* rather than a poet; but as Paul Oskar Kristeller and

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[33] *Scripta Ioannis Colet Professoris Theologiae, Decani Sancti Pauli London: In Principium Genesios*, ed. and trans. J. H. Lupton, in *Opuscula Quaedam Theologica* (London, 1876), ep. 4, p. 182; tr. pp. 27-28.

Hanna Gray have shown, these two terms were often used interchangeably by Renaissance humanists in referring both to themselves and one another.[34] Like Origen, Colet treats the *Genesis* account of the creation as a "high and holy myth" like Plato's *Timaeus*, which represented for the rustic and uncultivated multitude the elevated spiritual wisdom which could only be apprehended by the spiritual élite.

Colet's Failure to Use the Grammatical Method of Italian Humanism

In contrast to his use of the other *studia humanitatis*, however, Colet makes surprisingly little use of the humanist grammatical criticism in his biblical commentaries. The reason for this is made clear by a statement in Chapter 2 of his shorter commentary on *Romans* (Chapters 1 to 5) which he wrote for a young friend called Edmund after he became Dean of St. Paul's. In the second chapter of this commentary Colet states explicitly that it is not normally the task of the theologian to play the role of the grammarian.[35] In this respect Colet was very conservative and was later far surpassed as a critical scholar by Erasmus, who applied the humanist grammatical method to the Bible he had learned from Valla's Adnotationes on the New Testament. Colet, on the other hand, never cites Valla in his extant works, and it is questionable whether he used his writings; although as we have seen some of them were available at Oxford during his time there. Colet may even have been suspicious of the writings of Valla as detrimental to theology, as was the case with other theologians at this time. Indeed, this may be the explanation for the otherwise surprising fact that Erasmus did not mention his discovery and forthcoming edition of Valla's Adnotationes when he wrote Colet describing his studies in about December 1504.[36] Colet's conservatism with regard to the application of humanist grammatical and philological methods to the study of the Bible seems to us to have been the root cause of his failure to understand the importance of the study of Greek for the New Testament until after the publication of the first edition of Erasmus' Novum Instrumentum in 1516. However, it is true that after 1509 he had had copied by Peter Meghen part of Erasmus' fresh Latin translation of the Bible, which was not published until it was included by Erasmus with the second edition of his critical New Testament, the Novum Testamentum of 1518. But after the appearance of the first edition of this work in 1516 Colet wrote Erasmus that "without Greek we are nothing," and shortly after

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[34] Cf. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

[35] "Although an interpreter of Scripture is not expected to play the role of the grammarian or to examine words too minutely, nevertheless, since my young friend, Edmund, for whom I am dictating this, is studying literature along with his theological reading, I am willing to be a grammarian for him on this occasion . . ." *Scripta ad Rom.*, c. 2, p. 81. P. Albert Duhamel is thus incorrect when he speaks of "Colet's basically grammatical method" in his approach to the Bible. P. A. Duhamel, "The Oxford Lectures of John Colet: An Essay in Defining the English Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *14* (1953), p. 501.

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[36] Cf. Allen, I, pp. 403-412.

Thomas More informed the Dutch scholar that Colet was making strenuous attempts to learn Greek with the help of John Clement.[37]

Summary of Colet's Contribution to Biblical Scholarship as Part of His Program of Ecclesiastical Reform.

In summary, therefore, we find Colet a transitional figure in the application to biblical scholarship of the methods developed by the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century. His importance in this field was primarily through the influence of his biblical scholarship on his preaching and especially through the stimulation that it gave Erasmus, who found that Colet had already been lecturing on the Pauline Epistles for three years with the help of methods derived from the studia humanitatis, when he arrived in Oxford in the autumn of 1499. Colet's disgust by 1499 with a now decadent Oxford scholastic theology which had divorced itself from the biblical source of revelation through an overweening concern with dialectical problems and the gradual development of an artificial exegetical methodology, caused him to use humanistic methods learned in both Oxford and Italy to revive "the old and true theology" of the Bible and the Fathers for the reform of theological education. Because of the divorce of scholastic theology from biblical exegesis, which had been on the increase ever since the thirteenth century, scholasticism at Oxford, like that at Paris, was increasingly given over to trivial and irreverent questions which had undermined the moral goodness and sincerity of most of the "more modern" theologians. It was this decadent theology, formerly the queen of all the disciplines, which by 1499 Colet had decided to reform by means of a fresh approach to the Bible through its ancient interpreters, the early Church Fathers, and by the methods of humanism. This involved an almost complete turning away from the scholastic philosophy and theology in which, Erasmus tells us, Colet had been trained at Oxford before he continued his studies on the Continent. But for Colet, this task was primarily directed to the reformation of preaching and the declining life of the Church, rather than for the sake of scholarship as such; so that although Erasmus said of him, "I never saw a more felicitous intellect,"[38] he gave himself over to preaching rather than scholarship after he was made Dean of St. Paul's in 1503.

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[37] Cf. Allen II, epp. 423, 468, 471, pp. 257-259, 347, 350.

Thus, despite his use of the humane arts of rhetoric and history in order to understand the human Paul in the same way that Petrarch more than a century earlier had attempted to understand and communicate with the mind of the human Augustine, Colet's failure to comprehend the importance of philology and the knowledge of Greek for a genuine return to the sources of Christian revelation limited the scope of his application of the critical methods of Italian humanism to the Bible. For this reason, Colet's most important contribution to the renaissance of the Bible and the Fathers was through the influence that he exercised on Erasmus beginning in 1499, and the direction which Erasmus' humanistic scholarship began to take after this date; although it is possible that he also influenced the interests of Tyndale, who seems also to have been influenced by Erasmus at Cambridge. Colet's scholarly and reformatory thrust was primarily aimed at a revival of the ancient and traditional theology of the Western or Latin Church, that is to say, the Latin Bible, the Latin Fathers, and Dionysius and Origen, the Greek Fathers who had been read in the West throughout the Middle Ages in Latin translations. By this revival and its influence on the preaching of himself and other churchmen he hoped to bring about a re-formation into its pure and ancient form of the disastrous disorder and "ruin" of the contemporary Catholic Church toward the pristina forma of the Church established by the Apostles after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. Colet's ideals for reformation of the Catholic or Universal Church, which he shared with many other humanistically inclined spiritual reformers at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, would be developed and most effectually stated for the entire societas Christiana of Latin Europe by his friend Erasmus in his "Erasmian" program for the reform of this catholic society, the Church, through the development of a specifically Christian humanism.

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[38] "Nunquam vidi ingenium felicius, atque ob id similibus ingeniis vnice delectabatur: sed ad haec se malebat demittere quae praeпararent ad immortalitatem vitae futurae." Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 520, lines 413-15.

Chapter Five

JOHN COLET AND ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

The indirect influence of Colet upon the Protestant Reformation was primarily the result of his relationship with Erasmus of Rotterdam, his life-long friend from the time of their first meeting in Oxford in the fall of 1499 until Colet's death on September 16, 1519. We will now discuss the controverted question of the nature of Colet's influence on Erasmus. The evidence for the relationship between the two men comes almost entirely from the works of Erasmus himself, especially from his published correspondence which has been so admirably edited by P. S. Allen and his collaborators.

For a correct estimate of Colet's influence on Erasmus, it is necessary to examine the latter's career before he arrived in England on his first visit in 1499. It is then necessary to trace the relations between the two men both during the period of Erasmus' stay in Oxford from about September to November, 1499, until 1504 when Erasmus sent Colet copies of his first printed theological works.

Albert Hyma has correctly pointed out the inadequacy of the attempts of Seebohm and Lupton to assess Colet's influence on Erasmus without gaining as complete an understanding as possible of Erasmus' development before 1499.[1] In his Youth of Erasmus, however, Hyma errs in the opposite direction and places too much emphasis on Erasmus' early education. Thus he, like Paul Mestwerdt, vastly overemphasises the influence of the Brethren of the Common Life on Erasmus. R. R. Post has recently pointed out that scholars since Bonet-Maury and Mestwerdt have persistently maintained that the school at Deventer which Erasmus attended was still run by the Brethren, which in fact it was not.[2] Erasmus was in fact taught by the Brethren for only a very short time at Zwolle and always maintained that he gained very little from their teaching, which he disliked. It has often been supposed that Erasmus was exaggerating if not actually lying in this regard. But in actual fact far too great a stress has been placed on the importance of the Brethren in late medieval piety in general; chiefly, it seems, because of the work of Bonet-Maury, Mestwerdt, and Hyma.[3] Hyma went so far as to base an entire book on the premise that the *devotio moderna* was the basis of what he calls the "Christian Renaissance" of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[4] Mestwerdt was responsible for the claim that modern devotionalists played a key role in the development of Christian humanism during the fifteenth century.

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[1] Cf. A. Hyma, The Youth of Erasmus (Ann Arbor, 1930), passim; "Erasmus and the Oxford Reformers (1493-1503)," Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis, n.s., 25 (1932), pp. 69-92, 97-134.

658-660.

[2] R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden, 1968), esp. pp. 1-50; Cf. G. Bonet-Maury, *De opera scholastica fratrum vitae communis in Nederlandia* (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1889), and P. Mestwerdt, *Die Anfaenge des Erasmus. Humanismus und "Devotio Moderna"* (Leipzig, 1917), *passim*.

[3] Cf. A. Hyma, *Youth of Erasmus*, and P. Mestwerdt, *op. cit.*; and the criticisms of these two books as well as the theories concerning the *devotio moderna* by G. Bonet Maury, A. Renaudet, and L. W. Spitz in Post, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-49.

[4] A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance* (New York: Century Co., 1925).

Post has shown that the Brethren of the Common Life were in fact poorly educated by the standards of the fifteenth century; and that they had in any case lost most of their earlier influence on secondary education in the Netherlands and did not run the school at Deventer any longer when Erasmus was at school there. Erasmus seems not to have been taught by John Synthius, and he seldom mentions the Brethren in his correspondence except to say that he learnt nothing from them when he was at their school at 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc), which he attended between 1484 and 1487.[5] In fact he has only contempt for their teaching there. The development of Erasmus' intense interest in the studia humanitatis as well as his devotional piety seem, in fact, to have been instilled in him by his father, as we will attempt to show below. The development of this humanism, which is already evident in his first surviving letter to his guardian Peter Winckel written at the end of 1484, took place at the monastery of the Augustinian canons at Steyn, to which he was originally attracted because a former school-fellow in the order told him of the opportunities for study and books which the monastery afforded. Once again, as in the case of the English humanism of the fifteenth century, we note the great importance of the monasteries in the development of the studia humanitatis. Despite the undoubted decline of monastic spirituality by the fifteenth century, it is not surprising that this was a "Christian" humanism as was also much of that of Quattrocento Italy.[6] At Steyn Erasmus discovered other Augustinian canons interested like himself in studying the Latin classics and writing Neo-Latin poetry as his early correspondence amply attests; and it is our contention that this interest was originally instilled in him by his father Gerard who, as Erasmus later wrote in his Compendium vitae, had studied "both languages" (i.e., humanistic Latin and Greek) at Rome and with Guarino da Verona.[7] The failure to understand the great importance of the monasteries in the development of Renaissance humanism seems to have been caused in large degree by Erasmus himself, who in his later life attacked an often decadent monasticism in large part because of his constant fear that he would be recalled by his superiors to the monastic life which he came to dislike.

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[5] Cf. Allen, II, ep. 447, pp. 295-96; Erasmus, Opera Omnia (Leyden, 1703-1706), I, col. 921.

Thus to understand correctly the influence of Colet on Erasmus and the development of the "Erasmian" movement for humanistic and Catholic reform of the Church at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, we must assess Erasmus' interests in his early years before he met Colet and compare these with the direction of his development during and after his first English visit of 1499-1500.

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[6] Cf. P. O. Kristeller, Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters (Roma, 1956), esp. pp. 35-122, 355-372, 553-583; and Renaissance Thought (New York, 1961), pp. 3-23, 48-119.

[7] Cf. Erasmus' statements in the Compendium vitae in Allen, I, pp. 47-48, and F. M. Nichols, ed., The Epistles of Erasmus, 3 vols. (New York, 1962), I, pp. 6-7. We consider that the genuineness of the Compendium has been satisfactorily shown by both Nichols and Allen. Cf. Allen, I, pp. 576-78; Nichols, I, pp. 1-4.

Especially valuable in this regard is the Compendium vitae which Erasmus included in a private letter to his close friend Conrad Goclen on April 2, 1524. At this time he genuinely considered that he was about to die and submitted to Goclen a biography to print along with a final edition of his collected Epistles. Although doubts were cast on the authenticity of this work between 1877 and 1896 by the Dutch scholar J. B. Kan of Rotterdam, telling arguments have been presented for its validity. Furthermore, Kan himself finally came to disagree with his own criticisms (which had shifted their ground in the meantime) shortly before his death. Nevertheless, the result of his earlier doubts expressed in various Erasmiana appears to have been that no one has properly examined the evidence of the Compendium as Erasmus' fullest account of his early years.[8]

The evidence for Erasmus' early life given in the Compendium with the account which he gave in 1516 in his letter to "Lambertus Grunnius", his posthumous biography by Beatus Rhenanus, and his other letters and work are the primary sources for understanding the early development of his career. The Compendium was a private biography headed by Erasmus in Greek "to be read alone and in private."[9] It was never published during Erasmus' lifetime and was first printed in 1607 by Paul Merula, a professor of history at Leyden, along with a considerable collection of unpublished epistles of Erasmus.[10]

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[8] Cf. Allen, I, Appendix I, p. 576 and note 8.

[9] Allen, I, p. 47; Nichols, I, p. 5.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Although Erasmus was guilty of suppressing the full story concerning his elder brother Peter in the Compendium, we see no reason to doubt the validity of the statements he makes in it regarding his father's career at Rome and his interest in humane studies there. Whatever may have been the true facts about the relations between Erasmus' parents, his father, whom he calls Gerard, seems certainly to have been a priest and to have left for Rome when his "betrothed" or mistress Margaret became pregnant with Erasmus. According to the Compendium, while he was in Rome Gerard

> earned a reasonable livelihood by scribal work, since printing was not then in use. His handwriting was very fine. . . . After a time he applied his mind to honourable studies [honesta studia]. He was well versed in Latin and Greek. . . . He was also very proficient in Jurisprudence. For at that time Rome was wonderfully full of learned men. He heard Guarino. He copied all the [good] authors [omnes auctores] with his own hand. 11

Erasmus goes on to say that Gerard later returned home to the Netherlands and "took care to educate his boy [Erasmus] liberally . . . and sent him to a literary school,. . . but in his early years the boy was very unproficient in that unattractive literature for which he had not been born. . . . In his ninth year he was sent to Deventer. . . . That school was still barbarous."[12] Although Erasmus pretends in the Compendium that his parents were betrothed at the time of his conception

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[11] Compendium vitae Erasmi Roterodami in Allen, I, pp. 47-48; Nichols, I, p. 6.

[12] Allen, I, p. 48, lines 30-35.

and for this reason almost suppresses mention of his elder brother Peter, we consider that there is no reason to doubt his account of his father as a cultivated priest who brought back from Rome a fair knowledge of the studia humanitatis shortly after Erasmus was born in about 1466. It is certainly true that Erasmus' enthusiasm for bonae literae can be traced back to the earliest evidence that we have for his life, which tends to support his statements regarding his father in the Compendium. Erasmus goes on to say in his autobiography that while he was at the school at Deventer Alexander Hegius and John Zintheim were just beginning to introduce some better literature into that "still barbarous" school; so that "at last from his elder playmates in Zintheim' class he got the scent of better teaching [doctrina]."[13]

We have already seen Italian humanistic studies were considered the acme of European culture at this time.[14] Alexander Hegius, the headmaster of the Deventer school, was a friend of Rudolf Agricola who was then the leading humanist in the Netherlands. In his Catalogue of Lucubrations, Erasmus relates with pride that while he was at the school at Deventer he once had a chance to see the great Agricola himself.[15] By the time that he came to write his first surviving letter in c. 1484 to his guardian Peter Winckel of Gouda, Erasmus was already imitating the humanistic Latin epistolary style to a degree which annoyed his guardian, who evidently did not understand humanistic Latin.[16] After his father's death Erasmus says that he wanted to enter a university but that his guardians sent him instead to the school of the Brethren of the Common Life at 's-Hertogenbosch where "he wasted nearly three years at the Brothers' House, as they call it."[17] He goes on to say that "Rumbold" who taught him there tried to get him to join the Brethren but he "excused himself" and returned to his guardians having now acquired "a sufficiently fluent style from some of the good authors."[18]

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[13] Allen I, p. 48, lines 37-39.

[14] See Chapter 2.

[15] "It was Rudolf Agricola who first brought back with him from Italy some gleam of the better literature. When I was about twelve years old it was my fortune to see him at Deventer, but that was all." Erasmus, Catalogue of Lucubrations, trans. in Nichols, I, p. 20.

In about 1487, apparently at the insistence of his two surviving guardians who had been trying for some time to persuade both his brother and himself to enter a religious order, Erasmus finally chose to enter the monastery of the Augustinian canons at Steyn near Gouda. He states in the Compendium that the only reason that he agreed to enter this house was that he had met on a visit there a former roommate from the school at Deventer who "had seen Italy but had come back without having learnt very much."[19] Erasmus says that this friend, Cornelius, depicted the monastic life to him as providing one with an abundance of books, ease, quiet, and a community in the angelic life. This was exactly the kind of life which all through his life Erasmus craved; except that he never cared for the accompanying monastic discipline.[20]

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[16] Cf. Allen, I, ep. I, pp. 73-74.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[19] *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

[20] Cf. J. Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of the Reformation* (New York, 1957), p. 104.

Already by this time Erasmus showed a keen devotional piety of the late medieval type; but it is clear from his contemporary letters that classical and humanistic Latin literature was his prime interest, and we hear very little as yet about the sacri autores. However, he says that he immediately noticed the lack of genuine piety at Steyn and maintains in the Compendium that he almost left the monastery rather than actually become a monk.[21]

Although it is probable that in later life the memory of all the events which led up to his monastic profession became distorted in Erasmus' mind, it seems clear both from the Compendium and also from Beatus Rhenanus' biography that the major incentive for Erasmus' becoming a monk was the literary humanism which was already at this time beginning to flourish in the Dutch monasteries of Augustinian canons. Because of the circumstances of his life Erasmus would have been unable to gain an equal opportunity for study and writing in any other way. During his entire life Erasmus kept before himself the ideal of a life in pursuit of the bonae literae conjoined with true virtue and piety; but in these early years his correspondence shows that "secular" humanism was his overwhelming interest, and no doubt his motives for becoming an Augustinian canon were genuinely ambiguous. We do not believe that any clearer solution can be reached to this problem than that which Erasmus himself gives in his "secret Life" written for Conrad Goclen, one of his few really close friends, on the understanding that it would have been published had Erasmus died in 1524.

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[21] "Before profession he was preparing to go away but was detained, partly by shame, partly by threats, and partly by necessity." Allen, I, p. 50.

Although he unquestionably came to look upon his monastic life at Steyn from about 1487-93 with jaundiced eyes in later years, it is apparent from his early letters that during this period he had the opportunity to pursue the humanistic literary life which from the start was a very large part of the attraction of monasticism for him. In the *Compendium* he claims that the whole monastic flock at Steyn was led by him to study and his correspondence written in these years corroborates this statement although it also makes clear that it was principally secular studies that Erasmus led. In a letter written to his brother Peter Gerard from Steyn in about 1487 Erasmus already mentions Servatius Rogerus, the later Prior of the monastery, as a young man who is "devoted to those *disciplinae* which have chiefly delighted you and me from boyhood."[22] By these disciplines Erasmus clearly refers to the *literae humaniores*, since the purpose of the letter is to ask Peter to lend Servatius a copy of Juvenal's *Satires*.[23] There follow in Allen's edition of Erasmus' correspondence a series of letters written to Servatius himself in about 1487-88 in which Erasmus cites Juvenal, Ovid, Terence, Horace, and Vergil, but very seldom *sacri auctores*.[24] Very few of Erasmus' letters during this period are concerned with religion, and the total picture they present is that of an aspiring young humanist monk who is preparing to seek fame through the writing of Latin poetry. However, in one of these letters he does say that he will accept the advice of Cornelius Gerard and resolves that in the future he will compose nothing which does not either praise the saints or sanctity, by which he means that he will restrict himself to writing religious instead of secular poetry in Latin. In another letter to Cornelius of about May 1489, Erasmus mentions for the first time the Latin Fathers Augustine and Jerome in his surviving correspondence; and it is significant that both are recommended first and foremost as "eminent for their erudition in literature" and only secondly as "celebrated for the sanctity of their lives."[25] Erasmus obviously began his reading of the Latin Fathers primarily as examples of ancient Latin style and only secondarily as examples of holy living. He says nothing more about these two Fathers in this letter , except to point out that they disagreed with one another. He then goes on to give Cornelius a list of ten classical Latin poets who should serve as his models in poetry just as Cicero, Quintilian, Sallust, and Terence should be his guides in prose. He also recommends the _Elegantiae_ of Lorenzo Valla for improvement of the elegance of one's Latin style. He mentions later that in his youth he had made a _Paraphrase_ of this work for this purpose. He writes that he himself will use no other Latin writers as models for his style than the ancient writers and Valla. His interest in the works of Valla, whom he defends against the attacks of Cornelius, derives from the usefulness that he found in the _Elegantiae_ for improving his Latin.

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[22] Allen, I, ep. 3, p. 76, lines 32-35.
[23] *Ibid.*, line 40.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-127.

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[25] Allen, I, ep. 20, p. 99, lines 89-90.

These letters from Erasmus' days at Steyn show him as primarily interested in developing a good style in both Latin prose and poetry, and show that by 1492 he has already read widely in the ancient Latin authors with this in view. It is significant that when he does happen to mention Augustine and Jerome he does so only to show that two ancient *eruditi* who happen to be saints can differ in their opinions. He is interested in them primarily as two Latin stylists who both demonstrate the humanist virtue of *eruditio*. Although Erasmus states in the *Compendium* that he had immediately felt the absence of genuine piety at Steyn, it is surely significant that his correspondence of his years there from 1487-93 gives no sign of his making any attempt to raise the monastery's standard of piety; although he is proud of the fact that he led the monks in the study of good literature. It is also significant that his correspondent the humanist poet and monk Cornelius Gerard asked Erasmus to limit his poetry to sacred themes, and not the other way around. This does not mean that he was not interested in devotional piety and theology at this time but it does mean that if this side of his character was to be developed he needed contact with a forceful religious personality whom he could admire and who could show Erasmus the value of his beloved humane literature for the Church. But although he was in contact with the reforming Dutch Augustinian canons Standonck and Mombaer at Paris during the last decade of the century, Erasmus did not meet a personality which influenced him in this way until he met Colet at Oxford in the autumn of 1499, and was specifically appealed to by him to aid his revival of biblical and patristic theology by lecturing on the Old Testament in the same way that Colet was already doing on St. Paul.[26] Erasmus needed to meet a religious personality whom he could admire and who, in turn, could encourage him in his interest in the "old theology." This was precisely the combination he found first in Colet and later in Jehan Vitrier, whose biographies he significantly coupled together in his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521. What is especially important for the future career of Erasmus about the years at Steyn is that already by this time Erasmus had begun to read and appreciate the works of Valla, Augustine, and Jerome; although he read all three mainly for their contributions to _bonae literae_ and _eruditio_. But once the religious side of his interest in the goals of humanism had been aroused, Erasmus' continuing study of these authors and the Bible would lead to different results which are basic for a true understanding of his life-work and his contribution to Christianity. His interest in the grammatical method and "elegancies" of style of Valla would lay the foundation for his appreciation for and publication of the same author's _Adnotationes_ on the New Testament after he discovered a surviving manuscript of these at Parc in 1504. However, this was after he had already been influenced first by Colet and later Vitrier. Valla's critical and grammatical approach to the New Testament would play a key role in the eventual production of Erasmus' critical _Novum Instrumentum_ of 1516 and his _Annotationes_ on the New Testament of the following years.

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[26] Cf. Allen, I, ep. 108, p. 248, lines 74-79.

Similarly, his love of the writings of Jerome, as classical stylist and Christian scholar, would eventually lead Erasmus to study Jerome's scholarship on the Latin Bible and his correction of the Vulgate. Thus it was no chance that Erasmus' study of Jerome and the New Testament were carried out simultaneously between his return to France after meeting Colet in 1499 and his publication of a critical edition of Jerome shortly after the Novum Instrumentum in 1516.[27] Finally, Erasmus' early interest in Augustine, the patron saint of his religious order, was at first primarily in Augustine the rhetor, Latin stylist, and continuator of the classical tradition whose works contained so much knowledge of ancient culture which could be found nowhere else. This interest would produce much later his critical edition of Augustine; although because of his dogmatic theology and Luther's use of his works, Erasmus would come to like him least among the Latin Fathers.

On April 25, 1492, while still at Steyn, Erasmus was ordained priest by the Bishop of Burgundy. We know nothing at all about his frame of mind or the circumstances of his ordination; but it is possible that these were connected with the design that he successfully carried out shortly afterwards to leave Steyn by joining the service of Henry of Bergen, Bishop of Cambrai.[28] For not only did Erasmus seldom celebrate mass throughout his life, but it was very shortly after his ordination that he was offered the post of secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai which at last gave him his long-awaited opportunity to leave Steyn. He also expected to join the Bishop on a visit to Rome, the center of humane culture, where his father had gone before him. Erasmus was offered the position as the Bishop's humanist Latin Secretary, and this appears to have been the goal of his life in 1492.

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[27] Erasmus imitated Tertullian in calling the first edition of his critical New Testament in Latin and Greek the Novum Instrumentum. In subsequent editions it was styled Novum Testamentum.

[28] Cf. Huizinga, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

In joining the service of the nobly-born Bishop of Cambrai, Erasmus had entered on a life which was coveted by the clerical humanists of his time, as we have already seen in the case of the English humanists of the fifteenth century. This was a life in the service of an important man in the political and diplomatic world with the hope of patronage for one's humane studies. In 1493 we find Erasmus writing William of Gouda that he lives "wholly for literature."[29] But when he discovered that the Bishop of Cambrai would not be going to Rome he was thrown into a fit of depression. It was at about this time that his friend James Batt suggested that Erasmus enter the University of Paris where Batt himself had studied.[30] Erasmus arrived in Paris in the late autumn of 1495 with the Bishop's approval and promise of financial support.

Erasmus had been recommended by the Bishop to Jean Standonck of Mechlin, the Provisor or Master of the Collège de Montaigu at Paris, a man imbued with the reforming spirit of the devotio moderna in its most rigorous form. When Erasmus arrived at Montaigu Standonck was in the process of reforming this college in a very ascetic manner. Erasmus heartily disliked Montaigu, and its stringent rules made him ill and embittered the first part of his stay in Paris from 1495-96. He had come to Paris in order to earn the doctorate in theology. During this academic year he gave some lectures on the Bible at Montaigu and preached some sermons in honor of the saints. He also got into contact with Robert Gaguin, the General of Trinitarian Order, at this time the leading humanist in Paris, and Sellyng's correspondent. This was to result in Erasmus' writing a last-minute dedicatory epistle for Gaguin's De origine et gestis Francorum Compendium just before it appeared from the press at Paris on September 30, 1495.[31] It was this dedicatory epistle to Gaguin's work of humanist historiography which was Erasmus' first work to appear in print that Colet found all "the learned" (humanists) discussing when he was in Paris shortly after this time.[32] In his theological course at Paris Erasmus attended lectures on the Vulgate and Peter Lombard's Sentences as well as giving his lectures on Scripture at the Collège de Montaigu.[33] However, the theological lectures that he attended at the Sorbonne were given by the dominant school of Paris Scotists with whom Erasmus had little sympathy both because of their "barbarous" Latin and their whole dialectical and non-biblical approach to theology. In a letter of August 1497 to his English friend and pupil Thomas Grey, he calls them "pseudo-theologians" and attacks them with violent invective. In this letter also Erasmus gives an explicit statement of his views about theological study. He says that he has always been a vetus theologus or "primitive theologian." He adds ironically that he has lately become a Scotist, "a thing concerning which . . . if you love me you will pray the gods (superi) to prevent." [34] It is obvious that Erasmus must have been required to attend these lectures since he disliked them so much: he may have been meeting the necessary requirements for the Paris B.Th. In the final paragraph of this same letter Erasmus states his attitude toward what he called genuine theology in distinct opposition to that of the Paris Scotists of the time.

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[29] Nichols, I, p. 96.

[30] Cf. Allen, I, Appendix V, p. 589.

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[31] Allen, I, ep. 45, pp. 148-152.

[32] "Parrhisiis quando eram, Erasmus in ore doctorum non erat incelebris. Epistola quaedam tua ad Gaguinum scripta, in qua illius operam et artem in Gallica historia admiraris, erat mihi quasi specimen quoddam et degustatio perfecti hominis et magnae literaturae et multarum rerum scientiae." Colet's first letter to Erasmus when he arrived in Oxford in about September 1499; ibid., ep. 106, p. 242, lines 3 to 7. The common humanist and religious interests of Colet and Erasmus are at once apparent in this letter, as they would continue to be throughout their friendship.

[33] Hector Boece, a Scots student at Montaigu at this time, in 1528 wrote mentioning Erasmus' having lectured on the sacri codices during their period of study there together. Cf. Allen, I, p. 146.

> Most sweet Grey, do not mistake me. I do not want you to interpret this letter as directed against genuine theology, which I have always especially revered, as you know. But I have amused myself [in this letter] by making fun of some of the pseudo-theologians [theologastros] of our day. Than these men's brains nothing is more rotten, nothing is more barbarous than their language, nothing more stupid than their intellects . . . , nothing more insincere than their lives, and nothing blacker than their hearts. 35

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[34] Ibid., ep. 64, p. 190, lines 6-8.

[35] Ibid., pp. 192-93, lines 86-92.

In calling himself a vetus theologus, a term almost identical to that which two years later he would apply to Colet, Erasmus means a humanist theologian who bases his theology on its original sources, the Bible and the early Church Fathers.[36] We have seen that he had some knowledge of Saints Jerome and Augustine while still at Steyn, and in about 1491 he had amazed his brother Augustinian canons of the priory of Groenendael near Brussels by the voracity with which he read their collection of works of the patron saint of their order, since he even took Augustine's works to his cell with him at night.[37] In the De contemptu mundi which he had originally written at Steyn, but which was not published in its final form until many years later, Erasmus wrote:

> For the sources of our faith you shall turn to the Old and New Testaments. For eloquence turn to Jerome, Augustine, Arnobius and Cyprian, or if you are more fastidious to Lactantius, the Christian Cicero. 38

It is clear that during the period of his theological study at Paris between 1495 and 1499 Erasmus already believed that true theology must be based upon its ancient sources, the Bible and the Fathers, in

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36. Compare Allen, I, ep. 64, p. 190, lines 6-7: "Ego ille vetus theologus nuper Scotista esse coepi," with his statement regarding Colet in a letter to John Sixtin of about November 1499: "Praesidebat Coletus, veteris illius theologiae vindex atque assertor." Ibid., ep. 116, p. 268.

37. Allen, I, p. 590. Also see R. Bainton, Erasmus of Christendom, p. 31.

38. Quoted by Bainton, op. cit., p. 15.

accordance with the humanist view of the discipline. However, there is no sign whatever that he actively pursued this type of theological study at Paris after his stay at the Collège de Montaigu. In fact, he himself corroborates this in a somewhat obscure passage of the Compendium Vitae which has usually been overlooked. In discussing these same years at Paris between 1495 and 1499, Erasmus says that he "shrank from the study of theology because his heart was not inclined toward it; for he would have overthrown all their principles and would have been branded a heretic."[39] Erasmus apparently means by this remark that he could not accept the principles of Scotist theology as taught in Paris at this time. On September 13, 1496 he had written the Prior of Steyn, Nicholas Werner, that he would "indeed petition for the doctorate in theology if the gods [superi] are willing"; but he made little progress toward this degree during the next three years, no doubt for the reasons stated in the Compendium and his letter to Grey.[40] He now began to support himself by tutoring pupils, many of them English, in Latin grammar and rhetoric; and his letters of the next few years except the one to Grey already quoted show no concern with theological studies. Erasmus obviously continued to be

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39. "A studio theologiae abhorrebat, quod sentiret animum non propensam ut omnia illorum fundamenta subverteret, deinde futurum ut haeretici nomen inureretur." Allen, I, ii, p. 50, lines 111-113.

40. "Doctoratum quidem in theologia petam, superis ita volentibus." Allen, I, ep. 48, p. 160, lines 23-24.

a *vetus theologus* during this period in so far as he was a theologian at all, but he was clearly drifting away from theological studies because of his experiences with the Paris Scotists. Certainly his attitude to the "pseudo-theologians" of the "sacrosanct Scotist temple of the Sorbonne" typified by the professor he calls "Gryllard" in his letter to Grey would have made it difficult for him to pursue theology at Paris, and in fact he never took his doctorate there.[41]

Erasmus' attitude to the dominant Parisian theology in his letter to Grey, his statement in the *Compendium*, and his correspondence between 1497 and the summer of 1499 when he left for England with Lord Mountjoy all make clear that he was not at this time pursuing his doctorate in theology very seriously. It is true that he wrote the Prior of Steyn again in about April 1498 shortly after recovering from a serious illness, saying that he desires "a life of holy rest" in which he can "meditate on the Scriptures and wash away his former errors with tears," but the rest of his correspondence at this time gives no sign of his making any serious effort to reach this goal which could most easily have been acquired by returning permanently to Steyn.[42] It must be remembered that the principal reason for his being absent from the monastery was in order to study for his doctorate in theology now that he had left the service of the Bishop of Cambrai.

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[41] *Ibid.*, ep. 64, p. 191, lines 25-26; p. 192, lines 74-75.

[42] *Ibid.*, ep. 74, pp. 201-202, lines 3-7.

Erasmus Meets Colet

In 1498 and the early part of 1499 Erasmus appears to have been leading a life of uncertainty and unrest in Paris. His main concern had become the tutoring of pupils in "good literature." In any case,he was forced to do this to earn his living at Paris;because the Bishop of Cambrai had failed to come through with his promised support. In about March 1498 he began to teach the studia humanitatis to a young English student at Paris,William Blount, Lord Mountjoy. Mountjoy would later become a member of the royal Councils of both Henry VII and Henry VIII and also Erasmus' patron or "Maecenas" for the rest of his life. For by the winter of 1498-99 Erasmus shows every sign of having decided to settle down to the life of a humanistic literary man or "poet" who was searching for a patron to finance his pursuit of humane studies. Prior Werner of Steyn seems to have been agreeable to this arrangement, since Erasmus later wrote his successor that he had decided that Erasmus was not suited to the monastic life. At this time a member of a religious order was often given freedom to spend a long or even indefinite period at a university so long as his religious superior approved of his doing so. Prior Werner and the humanist monks of Steyn were evidently hoping that Erasmus would eventually add lustre to the name of their monastery by the literary reputation he was building for himself in humane studies. Erasmus was thus actually encouraged to stay on at Paris and pursue his humanistic studies as long as he could afford to do so, but with the understanding that he would eventually gain his doctorate in theology. By the winter of 1498-99 he was attempting to cultivate two rich patrons for his literary studies, one of whom was Lord Mountjoy. It was at this time that he wrote his friend William Herman asking him to write letters to Mountjoy praising the latter's love of good literature.[43] In early 1499 he was again hoping to go to Italy and wrote Herman that he was thinking of leaving for Bologna after Easter. Instead he accepted an offer from Mountjoy to accompany him to England, primarily in hope of finding patronage for his literary work there.[44]

Erasmus' First Visit to England, 1499-1500

It is generally agreed by Erasmus' biographers that his first visit to England from the summer of 1499 until January 1500 was a crucial period in the inward ripening of his personality and the direction of his life's work.[45] Erasmus came to England from Paris a humanist Augustinian canon with a good literary reputation and the *protégé* of a rich young nobleman. The early part of his visit was entirely spent in the great world of affairs with which Mountjoy was connected. This is evident from the letters which Erasmus wrote during this summer, especially the one to his friend Fausto Andrelini, Professor of Rhetoric and self-styled "poet laureate" at Paris; although we must take account of the fact that Erasmus attuned this letter to the raffish personality of its recipient. Erasmus tells Andrelini that he should hurry over to England where he will find that Erasmus has become "a not unpractised courtier."[46] However by August 1499 he appears to have tired of this life and would have returned to Paris had not the attainted Earl of Suffolk's flight from England caused a royal proclamation to be issued on August 20 which forbade any one to leave the country. According to the important letter which he wrote Colet in October, Erasmus now decided to spend a month or two in the company of "scholars like yourself" at Oxford University rather than spending more time with "those becollared courtiers."[47] We assume that he had been told by his London friends Mountjoy and Thomas More about the interest in the *studia humanitatis* at what he soon called "this most flourishing Oxonian Academy."[48]

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[43] Cf. Huizinga, op. cit., p. 28.

[44] "Before this time he had visited England to gratify Lord Mountjoy, then his pupil and now his Maecenas; but more friendly than munificent." Compendium vitae, trans. Nichols, I, p. 10. In February 1499 Erasmus had written, apparently half-seriously, to John Falcon: "Admire literature and praise it, but follow gain. . . . Above all things, look out for yourself." Allen, I, ep. 87, p. 223; Nichols, I, p. 187.

[45] Cf. for instance, Huizinga, op. cit., p. 29; R. W. Chambers, Thomas More (Ann Arbor, 1965), pp. 68-77; and R. Marcel, "Les 'Découvertes' d'Érasme en Angleterre," Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance, 14 (1952), p. 117, who agrees with Chambers' statement, "Erasmus finds England and himself."

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[46] Allen, I, ep. 103, p. 238, line 8.

[47] *Ibid.*, ep. 108, p. 249, lines 104-105.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 247, lines 60-61: "florentissima Academia Oxoniensis." It is possible that this is an intentionally complimentary reference to the fact that Colet studied at or at least imitated the ideals of the Florentine Academy. (Academia Florentina.)

When Erasmus arrived at the Oxford house of his order, St. Mary's College, in about September or October 1499, he was still not certain of his life's direction. He had now twice tried and twice rejected the role of resident humanist in the service of great men -- the Bishop of Cambrai and Lord Mountjoy. He was committed to "good letters." and to literary friendships, and considered himself a theologus vetus. However, although he was now thirty-two years old he had spent very little time in the actual study of theology, and, if the Compendium vitae can be relied on, he had intentionally avoided the study of it since about the time of his bitter attack on the Scotist pseudo-theologians of the Sorbonne in his letter to Thomas Grey of August 1497. It was in these circumstances that "the very humane" Prior (humanissimus Praesul) Richard Charnock of the Oxford Augustinian canons recommended this visiting Dutch brother to his close friend John Colet, who had now been lecturing for three years on the Pauline Epistles from the approach of the studia humanitatis.[49] Colet's first letter to Erasmus, which was written in about October 1499, is significant because it shows that his interest in meeting Erasmus is based not only on his admiration of his literary humanism, but especially because on the previous day his friend Prior Charnock had convinced him that Erasmus was a sincerely good man. Colet looked for precisely that combination of humane learning and sound moral character which later became so characteristic of the writings of Erasmus himself and the program which came to be known as Erasmianism. Colet wrote:

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[49] Cf. ibid., ep. 108, p. 248, lines 66-68; and p. 249, lines 115-116.

> My friend Brumus has written me a letter recommending you highly to me, Erasmus; as the reputation of your name and some of your writings had already done. When I was in Paris, Erasmus' name was famous among the learned there. A letter of yours addressed to Gaguin . . . gave me when I read it a sample [of the work] . . . of an accomplished man with a knowledge of literature and also a multitude of other things. But what recommends you most to me is that the Reverend Father with whom you are staying [Charnock], the Prior of the House and Church of Jesus Christ, told me yesterday that in his judgement you are a sincerely good man.[50]

This first letter from Colet to Erasmus shows the interesting combination of humanistic interests, sincerity, and an almost "Puritan" concern for moral goodness which were characteristic of his personality. Erasmus had never met quite this combination in anyone before, and from their first meeting (or from hearing Colet's lectures) it seems to have represented for him an ideal combination of interests for which he may have been unconsciously searching for some time and had not found in Paris.[51] In Colet Erasmus met a man who appealed to various sides of his many-sided personality. Not only was Colet interested in a broad range of humane studies, but he was also an absolutely sincere Christian theologian in an age of widespread insincerity in theology, who was already actively engaged in attempting to reestablish at Oxford that same vetus theologia based upon the

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[50] Ibid., ep. 106, pp. 242-43.

[51] Erasmus' extremely high opinion of Colet is clear not only in his letters of 1499 but throughout their friendship; and especially in the letters he wrote immediately after learning of Colet's death in 1519. Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 507-508, 527; and Lupton, Life of Colet, pp. 233-234.

Bible and the Fathers with which Erasmus identified himself in the De contemptu mundi and his letter to Thomas Grey of August 1497. Erasmus was no doubt impressed by Colet's social position and wealth as a potential patron. But he was most impressed by Colet's single-minded determination to restore "that old and true theology" by means of his fresh humanistic approach to the Pauline Epistles, which he would continue to expound until he left Oxford for London in about 1503 or 1504. By the time that Erasmus arrived in Oxford, such was the personality and the learning of the young lecturer that all the doctors of the University and the abbots of the nearby monasteries were coming with their texts to make notes on his exposition of St. Paul's theology.

Soon after their first meeting Colet actively attempted to persuade Erasmus to stay in Oxford to assist him in reviving this "old and true theology" from its original sources by lecturing on either Isaiah or one of the books of the Pentateuch, using the same humanistic approach to theology which Colet had now for three years used in his approach to the Pauline Epistles. The two men, to the intense pleasure of Erasmus, now began regularly to discuss theological problems arising from the Vulgate Bible both by word of mouth and by humanist correspondence.[52] Erasmus was especially pleased by a convivium arranged by Colet which was evidently intended to be a Christian version of Plato's Symposium or Convivium, at which the guests representing various viewpoints discussed the question from Genesis 1 as to why God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected that of Cain, an event which led to Abel's murder.[53] Immediately after this convivium given by Colet, Erasmus wrote a letter to the Dutch canon lawyer and humanist poet John Sixtin in which he describes the occasion with intense pleasure.

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[52] Allen, I, ep. 108, pp. 247-249. In his first letter to Erasmus Colet had written "I hope that our England may be as agreeable to you as I am convinced that by your learning you may be useful to her." Ibid., ep.106, p. 243.

> How I wish you had been present as I had expected at that convivium of ours. Nothing was lacking. . . . The guests might have been members of an Academy. . . . First there was Prior Richard [Charnock], that high priest of the Graces; then the theologian who had preached the Latin sermon that day, a modest as well as a learned man. . . . Colet, the liberator and saviour of that old theology, presided. On his right sat the Prior . . . in whose character there is an admirable interest in all kinds of literature together with the greatest humanity [humanitas] and highest integrity. On Colet's left sat a more modern theologian [recentior theologus]. And to his left I sat, so that the convivium might have a poet . . . 54

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53. Ibid., ep. 116, pp. 268-71. Cf. I. Pusino, "Der Einfluss Picos auf Erasmus," Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte, 46 (1928), pp. 75-96, who argues that this banquet was modelled on that of an Italian Platonic Academy. But this could have been an imitation of the Academy at Rome rather than that of Florence. However, Colet's intense interest in Platonism and the fact that the Florentine Academy under Ficino's leadership was the leading Platonic Academy in Italy at this time, and that Colet corresponded with Ficino and greatly admired his Theologia Platonica and other works, cause us to believe that it was the Florentine Academy which was here being imitated. See also our note above concerning "florentissima Academia Oxoniensis." (note 48).

54. Allen, I, ep. 116, p. 268.

Erasmus here still considers himself principally a poeta, as the humanists often called themselves, rather than a theologian.[55] He goes on to describe to Sixtin his own contribution to the after-dinner theological discussion which had been initiated by Colet. As a poeta he invented a mythological interpretation of the biblical story of Cain and Abel, based upon the Greek myth of Prometheus. What is especially important about this letter for Erasmus' development is his obvious admiration for the sincerity and authority with which Colet dominated this theological discussion carried out from the viewpoints of various disciplines; and the encouragement which he gave Erasmus to apply his literary gifts to a specifically theological problem which directly involved biblical interpretation. Erasmus goes on to say that Colet dominated the discussion like a man inspired.

> Many subjects provoked discussion. Colet maintained that Cain's first offense against God was this: in his distrust of his Creator's bounty and overconfidence in his own exertions he was the first to break up the soil, while Abel was content with what grew of itself and fed sheep. The [more modern] theologian and I did our best to attack this theory, he with syllogistic arguments and I with rhetorical ones. For the Greeks say that Hercules himself is not the match for two men. Nevertheless Colet by himself overcame us all.

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[55] "Before the word 'humanist' gained general currency, the humanists were referring to themselves and their colleagues by other names -- sometimes 'philosophers,' often 'poets.' Most frequently, however, they called themselves 'orators.'" Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," Journal of the History of Ideas, 24 (1963), p. 500.

> He seemed endowed with a more than human dignity and bearing. His voice and the look in his eyes changed, and he seemed to grow larger and to be inspired by a god. 56

The *Disputatiuncula de tedio, pauore, tristicia Iesu*, and Erasmus' Promise to Colet to Assist Him in Reestablishing Biblical Theology

This whole *convivium* with its application of humanist interests to theological problems drawn directly from the Bible as the original source of revelation immensely pleased Erasmus, and, together with other biblical discussions with Colet, revived his interest in the *vetus theologia*. At about the same time he had another discussion with Colet on a problem of New Testament theology. This concerned the proper interpretation of the fact that in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before his death, Jesus had prayed that the "cup" of his coming crucifixion for the Atonement of man be taken away from him by the Father.[57] Erasmus interpreted Jesus' words in accordance with the usual scholastic interpretation which he had probably learnt at Paris, and attributed his agony [*tedium*] during this prayer to a fear of death in his humanity, for the moment unaided

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56. Allen, I, ep. 116, p. 268, lines 20-31.

57. Matthew 26:37-44; Luke 22:42-44. Erasmus' account of the origin of this "little disputation," which was carried out both orally and by humanist epistle, is given in its final form in Erasmus, *Opera Omnia*, ed. J. Clericus (Leyden, 1703-1706), V, cols. 1263-1294. See also Allen, I, ep. 108-111, pp. 245-60, who gives parts of the original letters of this *disputatiuncula de tedio Iesu*.

by his divinity. Colet disagreed entirely with this scholastic opinion. He pointed out that many of the Christian martyrs were reported to have met their deaths without showing any signs of fear; and he could not believe that Jesus Christ, the perfect man, could have in this way been surpassed by his later followers. He also maintained, following Jerome, that it was totally inconsistent with Christ's great love for mankind that at the crucial moment he should have shrunk in dread from the very death which he had willed to die for man. He characteristically maintained with rigid single-mindedness the view that he "had deeply drunk" from the fount of Jerome's commentary on Matthew 26:38. According to Jerome, Jesus' agonizing prayer is to be explained by the extreme guilt which in his love for all men He knew that the Jews were incurring by their act of slaying the Son of God. Because the Jews in the hardness of their hearts were bringing upon themselves eternal destruction in the very sacrifice which was intended to save them, the cup was indeed bitter and Jesus' mental anguish was extreme, but he was not afraid. In the middle of the original discussion, Erasmus wrote later, Prior Charnock came into the room and Colet broke off the dispute by asking Erasmus to think the question over. Erasmus immediately did so and found on research that the majority of both ancient and modern biblical commentators supported the dominant scholastic interpretation against that of St. Jerome and Colet. He therefore wrote out a lengthy and reasoned reply in the form of a letter in which he drew up both his own and Colet's opinions. P. S. Allen was able to show that the worked up version of this dispute which Erasmus published at Antwerp on February 15, 1503 entitled the *Disputatiuncula de tedio, pauore, tristicia Iesu* is in fact an amplification of two separate epistolary essays which Erasmus wrote at Oxford on this subject and which are preserved in Gouda Town Library MS. 1324.[58] From the Gouda manuscript it is clear that Erasmus did considerable theological research in the Fathers for the *Disputatiuncula* between the time of his original exchange of several letters on the subject with Colet in 1499 and the first published edition of February 1503 or 1503/1504. The most important difference between the two versions is that in Erasmus' original letters there are very few citations from the Church Fathers although several from the Latin classics; while in the published version of 1503 there is a wealth of patristic citation. This clearly shows the intense theological research in which Erasmus was engaged from the time of his return to France in January 1500 until the publication of the *Disputatiuncula* along with the original edition of the *Enchiridion militis Christiani* and other works in his *Lucubratiunculae* of 1503 or 1503/1504.[59]

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[58] Cf. Allen I, pp. 245-46, and Appendix IX, pp. 609-13, which describes Gouda MS. 1324. The full title of the work as printed in 1503 is *Disputatiuncula de tedio, pauore, tristicia Iesu, instante crucis hora, deque verbis quibus visus est mortem deprecari: 'Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste.'*

[59] Cf. Allen, I,pp. 245, 229.

The Disputatiuncula de tedio Iesu was in fact the earliest theological work of Erasmus to be printed[60] and was the direct result of Colet's asking him to write down his opposing theological arguments. It is interesting that it was Colet who rigidly defended the opinion of Jerome against Erasmus, the other Fathers, and the majority of the scholastic theologians. In the final form of the discussion Erasmus shows that he already had the makings of a greater biblical commentator than Colet, largely because of his broader and less rigid or single-minded point of view. But there is no doubt whatever that his contact with Colet during his short visit to Oxford in late 1499 was what seriously directed Erasmus toward the revival of that "old theology" drawn from the original sources of the Bible and the Fathers of which he had told Thomas Grey in 1497 he had always been the supporter, but of which there is very little sign of his actual study up until this time. That there was indeed a change of his attitude in this regard after meeting Colet is in fact clearly stated in the important letter which he wrote to him in October 1499 to explain his attitude to theological study, and which he published as the preface to the Disputatiuncula in 1503. In this letter Erasmus refuses to stay at Oxford to help Colet revive "that old and true theology" by lecturing on the Old Testament as Colet has for three years been doing with the Epistles of St. Paul. However, he pledges that he will give Colet the assistance for which he asks just as soon as he feels that he is properly prepared for this most pious but arduous task. We will quote at length from this letter, since it shows clearly Colet's crucial influence on Erasmus in this regard.

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[60] The De contemptu mundi, which was written while Erasmus was at Steyn, was rewritten and not published until 1521. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus, De Contemptu Mundi, trans. Thomas Paynell, ed. W. J. Hirten (Gainsville, Florida, 1967), pp. viii-ix.

> In saying that you dislike this modern kind of theologian [neotericum hoc theologorum genus] who spend their entire lives in subtleties and sophisticated quibblings you do not displease me, my Colet; because I agree with you. . . . For whereas theology, the queen of all the disciplines, was once enriched . . . by ancient eloquence, these men disfigure it . . . by their failure to express themselves properly and . . . their barbarous style. What the early theologians stated clearly is now made confusing by their very efforts to find a solution (as they call it) for every possible question. . . .
>
> In your battling with this type of man so as to restore the old and true theology to its former dignity, beset and hampered as it is by their thorny subtleties, you, Colet, (as God loves me) have chosen for yourself a most excellent province [of learning]. It is . . . also a most devout one both for the sake of the theological discipline itself . . . and also for the sake of this most flourishing Oxonian Academy. But, to speak the truth, it is one which will cause trouble and jealousy. By your learning and industry you will overcome the trouble involved, while your greatness of soul [animi tui magnitudo] will easily ignore the jealousy. In fact, among the theologians themselves there are a good many here who have both the will and the ability to help you . . . since in this most famous school none of the learned have not listened most attentively to your public expositions of the Pauline Epistles now in their third year. . .
>
> I am not surprised at your having undertaken so difficult a task. . . but rather that you call me, a mere nobody, to join you in this magnificent endeavor. For you ask, in fact you almost reproachfully insist, that as you are doing with Paul, so I should expound the ancient Moses or the eloquent Isaiah, and, as you express it, "give some warmth to the studies of this Academy during the coldness of these winter months". . . . However, I am well aware that I do not have

> sufficient learning to undertake so important a task. . . . Do not reply that I am shameless in turning down your request, since I should really be so if I did not refuse you. . . . For how can I teach what I have not yet learned myself? . . . It would be extreme rashness for me to chance my little strength in such an undertaking, and, as the Greeks say, "attempt a masterpiece before I have learnt my trade."
>
> You reply that you have been expecting my help, and you complain of having been deceived in your opinion of me; but you should expostulate with yourself instead of with me. It is untrue that I misled you because I never promised you nor even hinted at anything of this kind. . . . However, rhetorical and poetical literature ceased to be pleasant to me the moment they ceased to be necessary . . . and you reproach me unfairly, because I have never made secular literature (as they call it) my calling. 61

Having thus firmly refused Colet's insistent request to stay at Oxford and assist him in reestablishing in opposition to the dominant scholasticism "the old and true theology beset by thorns and subtleties", Erasmus ends the letter with a firm promise to assist Colet's attempt to revive theology just as soon as he feels properly prepared for this difficult task. It was no chance that Erasmus published a (probably reworked) form of this letter at the beginning of the Disputatiuncula in 1503 along with the first edition of the Enchiridion as his manifesto before the learned world that he was now beginning to fulfil the promise which he had made to Colet in 1499.

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61. Allen, I, ep. 108, pp. 246-49. I have based my translation on that of Lupton, Life of Colet, pp. 110-112.

He ends the letter with the following pledge, which he did in fact begin to work toward fulfilling soon after he returned to France in January 1500.

> However, I am so far from desiring to oppose your most excellent and holy efforts, that, since I am not yet a suitable assistant, I promise to be a zealous encourager and promoter of them. It only remains to say that when I think I have the necessary firmness and strength I will join at your side and will give you certainly zealous, even if not outstanding, assistance in the task of liberating theology. In the meantime nothing can be more pleasant to me than that we should continue as we began in arguing about sacred literature [_sacris_ _litteris_] privately between ourselves, either in person or by means of letters. 62

Thus, it is clear that Erasmus' contact with Colet at Oxford in late 1499, where he found that the future Dean had already been engaged for three years in attempting to reestablish the genuine theology based upon the Bible by applying humanistic methods to the Pauline Epistles and probably the Gospels also,[63] played a crucial role in his decision at this time to apply his own humanist learning to the task of reviving biblical theology. This program upon which Colet had already been engaged for three years at Oxford at the time of Erasmus' arrival there can be correctly termed "Christian humanism," so long as this term is not taken to imply that the Italian humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

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62. Allen, I, p. 249, lines 106-113; cf. Lupton, _op_. _cit_., pp. 112-113.

63. Cf. _ibid_., ep. 181, p. 404, lines 15-16. Colet's commentaries on the Gospels must have already been written in 1499; unless Erasmus had learnt about them before December 1504 through a lost letter or other contact with someone other than Colet himself. Cf. _ibid._, p. 404, lines 8-12.

were necessarily non-Christian or "pagan", as has been maintained by much of the older Renaissance scholarship. Colet, as Erasmus later stated in his biography, was exceptional for his time in his single-minded and courageous determination to use the fashionable studia humanitatis for a single specific purpose: the rediscovery of the New Testament Gospel through the aid of its early patristic interpreters, so that by preaching it from the pulpit he would do his utmost to reform the Catholic Church and its theology to its "pristine" simplicity and purity. For, although Lorenzo Valla in his Ad Novum Testamentum Adnotationes of about 1444 had made what seems to have been the first attempt of humanism at a scientific criticism of the Vulgate, his work had never been published and had been forgotten until Erasmus found what is now the only surviving manuscript of it in 1504. But Erasmus' letters between the time he left England in January 1500 and his next extant letter to Colet in late 1504 show that he was carrying out his promise to Colet to help him revive biblical theology. And the letter of December 1504 which renewed their friendship after five years was significantly accompanied by gifts of the Disputatiuncula and the Enchiridion militis Christiani to show that he was indeed fulfilling his promise of 1499. [64]

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[64] Allen, I, ep. 181, pp. 403-406, esp. lines 42-52. It is probable that it was from Augustine's Enchiridion, together with Colet's emphasis upon the spiritual warfare of the Christian soldier and Erasmus' own studies of the Pauline Epistles, that Erasmus derived crucial ideas for his own Enchiridion. For Colet's view of Christian spiritual warfare, see for instance, Enarr. Rom., c. 13, p. 95; In Cel. Hier., c. 16, p. 46; In Eccl. Hier. c. 7, pp. 142-143, and Erasmus' account of his courageous sermon against physical

Already in March 1500 we find Erasmus writing his faithful friend James Batt mentioning that his Lucubrations, evidently the Lucubratiunculae, have arrived back to him safely and asking Batt to look out for a package of his containing "St. Augustine's Enchiridion, . . . St. Paul's Epistles, and some other things." He also writes that he is now deep in the study of Greek which is "almost too much for my courage."[65] This is the first indication we have of Erasmus' serious study of Greek. The context of this letter and his statement to Colet in 1499 that he was not yet properly equipped for biblical study shows that he had already realized the basic importance of this language for the study of the New Testament; although it was also

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warfare in the presence of Henry VIII and the court on Good Friday 1513. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 525, lines 577-587. Of these works, the Enarratio on Romans at least was clearly written before Erasmus' arrival in Oxford in 1499. The idea is of course originally drawn from St. Paul's metaphor of spiritual armour and fighting the good fight of faith. Colet interpreted this metaphor by means of the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius whom he believed to have been St. Paul's convert and intellectual disciple. In the Enchiridion, Erasmus especially recommends the study of Plato and the Platonists among the philosophers, and for Scriptural interpretation, first and foremost the study of the theology of St. Paul, and then that of Origen, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. These are all opinions which Colet already held in 1499. Cf. The Enchiridion of Erasmus, ed. and trans. Raymond Himelick (Bloomington, Ind., 1963), pp. 51, 53; and compare Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 266-268, 270-273, and 279-282. For the authenticity of Erasmus' Life of Colet in this letter, see our Appendix I.

[65] Nichols, I, ep. 112, pp. 232-33.

important for his Adagia, the first edition of which appeared in 1500.[66] In July 1501 he wrote James Tutor that "I sometimes think of going to England again to spend a month or two in theological study with Colet; for I am not ignorant how much fruit there would be for me in doing so."[67] In the autumn of this year we find him writing to a priest called Edmund(who was evidently a member of the Franciscan monastery at St. Omer) that he intends to spend the coming winter in the study of sacred literature. He asks him to lend him both Augustine's and Ambrose's commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, Origen's Homilies, Nicholas of Lyra, "and any other writer on Paul."[68] It was at this time that he followed in Colet's footsteps by beginning a commentary on Romans which he later told him he discontinued after writing four volumes (voluminа) because of his constant awareness of the insufficiency of his knowledge of Greek. It was also at about this time that he came to know Jehan Vitrier, the Warden of the Franciscan monastery at St. Omer, who also especially loved the Pauline Epistles and who reminded Erasmus in so many other ways of Colet.[69] Three years later, in about December 1504, he wrote Colet sending him the printed Disputatiuncula de tedio Iesu and Enchiridion as signs that he was carrying out his promise to pursue sacrae literae and to assist in the revival of "that old and true theology." He wrote

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[66] Allen, I, ep. 159, p. 368, lines 53,51.

[67] Nichols, I, ep. 155, p. 333.

[68] Allen,I, ep.165, pp. 375-76.

[69] This was the reason that in 1521 he chose to write Vitrier's Life as the companion biography to that which he had already been preparing since 1519 on Colet. Cf. J. C. Olin, ed., Christian Humanism and the Reformation, pp. 164-166,191.

> I cannot tell you, most excellent Colet, how intensely I long to devote myself to sacred literature and how disgusted I am with every hindrance and delay. But the unkindness of Fortune, who still regards me with her old disfavor, has prevented me from extricating myself from my entanglements. It is for this reason that I have come to France in order to clear myself of them to some degree. . . . Now I shall be free to give myself over whole-heartedly to sacred studies, in which I mean to spend the rest of my life. Three years ago I did attempt to write something on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and finished about four volumes at a single effort. I would have continued this if I had not been hindered; the main hindrance being my constant lack of Greek. Consequently for about three years now I have been entirely taken up with the study of this language and I do not think my labour has been entirely in vain. . . . I have studied a good part of the works of Origen, and I think I have made progress under his teaching. He appears to explicate some of the original sources and first principles of the art of theology.
>
> As a small literary gift I am sending you some of my Lucubratiunculae. Among them is that discussion concerning Christ's Agony which we formerly undertook in England, but it is so altered that you will hardly recognize it. . . . The Enchiridion was not composed to display my intelligence or eloquence, but only to correct the common error of people who make religion consist of ceremonies and an almost more than Jewish observance of corporeal matters, whereas they are extremely careless of those things which concern genuine piety. I have tried to lay down a kind of ars pietatis, following the fashion of those who have composed systems of instruction in various other branches of learning. 70

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70. Ibid., ep. 181, pp. 404-405, lines 24-36, 38-52.

Almost nothing is known about Jehan Vitrier, and we will be unable thus to trace here the influence which he like Colet, had on Erasmus. But there is absolutely no question that both these men were extremely important in the development of that Christian humanist theology which has come to be known as "Erasmianism" and which Erasmus himself, in imitation of the Church Fathers as early as St. Justin Martyr, called the philosophia Christi or philosophia Christiana.[71] Nor will we be able here to trace in detail the influences which we believe can be shown between Colet's theological writings and the extremely influential Enchiridion of Erasmus which was to become as it were the handbook of Erasmianism. In his Life of Colet Erasmus states that Colet had studied the early Fathers, Dionysius, Origen, Augustine and Jerome before he left for Italy in about 1492 and the influence of all these writers is clear in his surviving commentaries on St. Paul.[71a] St. Paul's theology of the spiritual man and that of the Fathers, especially Dionysius but also Origen and Augustine, were the principal sources of Colet's spiritualizing or mystical interpretation of Scripture. The exclusive study of these sacri autores was the form that his pious humanism took during the period of his study in Italy and France from about 1492-95.[72]

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[71] The treatment of Christian theology as philosophy was part of the apologetic adaptation of Christianity to the dominant paideia or culture of the Graeco-Roman world during the second to sixth centuries A.D. Cf. Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia, passim. I am indebted to Professor Roland Bainton for the reference to Justin Martyr. Erasmus uses as equivalent phrases philosophia Christi, evangelica philosophia and coelestis illa philosophia. Cf. McConica, op. cit., p. 15.

[72] Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 268-275.

[71a] Cf. Enchiridion, in Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, Ausgewaehlte Werke, ed. H. and A. Holborn (Muenchen, 1933), pp. 31, 71, and passim, for Erasmus' recommendation of these Fathers next to St. Paul for studying the theology of the New Testament.

In this regard it is clear that Colet laid important groundwork for the later development of Erasmianism. Similarly, in both his Enchiridion and his Ratio seu methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam, the fullest account of his theological methodology, Erasmus specifically recommends a spiritual or mystic interpretation of the Bible based upon the De doctrina Christiana of Augustine, the Mystic Theology and Divine Names of the Pseudo-Dionysius, and the biblical interpretations of Origen. The Enchiridion is also strongly dependent upon his especial interest in the Pauline Epistles, which we have seen developing since March 1500.[73] We therefore contend that the theological content as well as the inspiration of Erasmus' theological humanism was significantly affected by ideas he began to learn from Colet in 1499. We add that in the Enchiridion Erasmus especially recommends the philosophical study of the Platonici to pious Christians, while he states in his biography that Colet had studied Plato and Plotinus in some depth before he left for Italy in about 1492.[74] He had written with great approval to his English friend Robert Fisher as early as December 5, 1499, "when I hear my Colet, it seems to me that I am listening to Plato himself."[75]

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[73] Cf. Enchiridion, c. 29, in H. and A. Holborn, eds., Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus Ausgewaehlte Werke (Muenchen, 1933), p. 71, lines 21-26; and Ratio ad veram theologiam, in ibid., p. 178, lines 7-18. Erasmus' principles for the spiritual interpretation of the Bible following Paul, Dionysius, Augustine, and Origen in these two works are very close to those maintained by Colet in his theological writings.

[74] Cf. Enchiridion militis Christiani, C 29, in Holborn, ed., p. 70; Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 514-515, lines 263-68. Cf. A. Renaudet, Études érasmiennes (1521-1529) (Paris, 1939), pp. 129-30.

We will end this chapter by noting that Erasmus' emphasis on the so-called adiaphora or inessential points of doctrine in order to emphasize doctrinal agreement and concord in the Catholic Church, which is developed in his letter to John Schlecta of November 1519 regarding the Hussite schism and which would play an extremely important role in the development during the sixteenth century of the characteristically Anglican doctrine of the via media between Rome and the Reformation, is also attributed by him to Colet.[76] For in the colloquy entitled Confabulatio pia which he published in 1522, Erasmus makes clear that Colet had held a similar doctrine some time before his death and had taught his house-pupils a devotional pietas which emphasized trust in the Scriptures and placed a minimal emphasis upon the theological dogma developed from the Scriptural words. In this colloquy an interlocutor named Erasmius or Erasmus who seems to represent Erasmus himself is discussing pietas and doctrina with a boy called Gaspar. He is modeled on a former house-pupil of Colet, probably Thomas Lupset who was later Erasmus' own pupil at Cambridge after 1512 or 1513.[77]

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[75] Allen, I, ep. 118, p. 273, line 21, cf. Enchiridion, ed. Himelick, p. 51.

[76] Cf. ibid., IV, ep. 1039, p. 118, lines 219f.; V, ep. 1334, lines 217-19; McConica, op. cit., p. 27, and passim.

> Erasmius: Many abstain today from the study of theology because they are afraid lestthey may waver in their Catholic faith; when they see that there is no doctrine which is not called into question.
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> Gaspar: I firmly believe what I read in the Holy Scriptures and the so-called Apostles' Creed. I believe these with the deepest trust [summa fiducia], and do not scrutinize any questions beyond them. The other questions I leave to the theologians to dispute about and define if they want to.
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> Erasmius: What Thales taught you this philosophy?
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> Gaspar: When I was a boy I lived in the household of the excellent John Colet. . . . It was he who influenced my early youth with precepts such as these. 78

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77. Cf. Erasmus' letter to Colet from Cambridge of about July 11, 1513: "I have done the collation of the New Testament and am now attacking St. Jerome. When I am finished I fly back to you. Your true pupil [verus tuus alumnus] Thomas Lupset is . . . useful to me both by his daily companionship and the assistance he lends me in these corrections. . . . No one could be more attached to you than he is." Allen I, ep. 270, pp. 527-28, lines 58-64, trans. J. A. Gee, The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset (New Haven, 1928), pp. 44-45. Lupset was one of the first pupils at Colet's refounded St. Paul's School. He seems later to have translated all Colet's Latin sermons into English, including the famous Convocation Sermon of 1511/1512 on the reformation of the Church, which we have analyzed below.

78. Cf. Seebohm, op. cit., p. 106; and C. R. Thompson, ed., The Colloquies of Erasmus (Chicago, 1965), pp. 41, 30-32. In the original edition of March 1522 (Basel, J. Froben) this colloquy is called Confabulatio pia. In his De utilitate Colloquiorum of 1526, Erasmus entitles it Pietas puerilis.

Although we intend to support our view in more detail by further research into the writings of Erasmus, we believe that we have shown that the Christian humanism of Colet and his ideas for re-establishing vetus illa ac vera theologia from the "most pure sources of the Bible and the Fathers" by his study and his exposition of the Pauline Epistles at Oxford by 1499 were of significant importance for the development of that program for humanistic and devotionalist reform of the Catholic Church during the sixteenth century which has come to be known as Erasmianism.[79]

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[79] Cf. J. Étienne, Spiritualisme érasmien et théologiens louvanistes (Louvain, 1956), pp. 1-62; McConica, op. cit., passim, and the works of Augustin Renaudet cited in our Bibliography for the development of Erasmianism during the sixteenth century. McConica treats its influence in England.

Chapter Six

THE REVIVAL OF PLATONIC STUDY IN FLORENCE AND IN ENGLAND*

Before beginning our discussion of the Platonic influence in Colet's Oxford expository lectures on the Pauline Epistles, we will briefly summarize the development of the humanistic revival of Plato at Florence and the influence of Platonic studies upon fifteenth-century European culture. Once again we note the basic importance of Renaissance humanism upon Colet's approach to the study of the New Testament and the reformation of the Church.

An important aspect of Italian humanism that reached England during the fifteenth century was the renewed study of Plato and the *Platonici*. As early as the mid-fourteenth century Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), one of the earliest of the Italian humanists, had acquired some of the works of Plato in Greek and had revered his philosophy even though he could not read Greek. Petrarch had also inspired a similar veneration in his friends and humanist successors at Florence, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) and Coluccio Salutati (1330-1406). Salutati was the first Renaissance Westerner to order, through a Florentine friend, a complete Greek text of Plato. It was also on the initiative of Salutati that the Florentine Republic established Manuel Chrysoloras, a Byzantine professor and envoy, as teacher of Greek in their city in the last years of the fourteenth century. It was from him that Leonardo Bruni Aretino, Palla Strozzi, Ambrosius Traversari and other Florentine humanists acquired their knowledge of Greek.

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* Portions of the material in this chapter were included in a paper I gave before the Canadian Historical Association, June 1968, entitled "John Colet and the Pseudo-Dionysius: English Mystical Theology and Humanistic Reform on the Eve of the Reformation."

Salutati's admiration for Plato was handed down to the next generation of Florentines. This accounts in large part for Cosimo de' Medici's enthusiastic reception of the Byzantine Platonists Gemistos Pletho and Bessarion at the Council of Florence in 1439.[1] It was Pletho who inspired Cosimo to found the Platonic Academy at Florence at which Marsilio Ficino through Cosimo's patronage was commissioned to make a complete translation of all Plato's work from Greek to Latin by 1484. It was upon the intellectual basis of Ficino's study of the original works of Plato that he wrote his platonizing philosophical theology the Theologia Platonica in 1482, the year before Colet probably entered Oxford as an undergraduate.

We have seen already that Duke Humfrey of Gloucester commissioned Pier Candido Decembrio to translate Plato's Republic into Latin in 1437, and that William Grey had the Euthyphro, Timaeus, and the Apology in Greek in the library which he later bequeathed to Balliol

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[1] Cf. R. Klibansky, The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (London, Warburg Institute, 1950), p. 32.

College, Oxford.[2] Sometime between 1473 and 1486 John Doget (or Dogget), a nephew of Cardinal Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, made a study of the Phaedo from the viewpoint of Christian theology in his Examinatorium in Phedonem Platonis. Doget, later Provost of King's College, Cambridge, had previously studied at Padua and Bologna between 1464 and 1469; and this work is yet another attempt to imitate the Latin style and mannerisms of the Italian Humanists.[3] But it is also evident that in traditional scholastic fashion Doget is interested in the Platonic philosophy only as a rational aid to Christian theology.[4] In emphasizing the similarity between Christianity and Platonism Doget was simply following a tradition which dated from the earliest centuries of the Church. For the study of Plato and Platonism in Latin had never ceased in the West from ancient times throughout the Middle Ages. The ancient and early medieval Latin writers, Cicero, Apuleius, Aulus Gellius, Chalcidius, Augustine, and Boethius, as well as medieval Latin translations of the Pseudo-Dionysius, had all made the Platonic philosophy available to the

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2. Cf. p. 48 above.

3. Weiss, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

4. Ibid., pp. 166-167; Klibansky, op. cit., p. 52.

Western theologians in an unbroken tradition from ancient times until fresh humanist translations of Plato and the Platonici from the Greek in the fifteenth century. These culminated in the work of Ficino. In a letter which Ficino wrote in 1489 to his friend Martin Prenniger, Chancellor of the Bishop of Constance, he himself traced this unbroken Platonic tradition from antiquity down until his own contemporaries. In answer to Prenniger's question as to when the libri Platonici had begun again to be used by the Latins, Ficino cites a long list of Latin Platonic writings from the ancient writers until his own day. Among these, says Ficino, are many of the works of Augustine, Boethius's Consolatio philosophiae, Apuleius' De daemonibus, Chalcidius' commentary on the Timaeus, Macrobius' exposition of Cicero's Somnium Scipionis, the De fonte vitae of Avicebron, the De causis of Alfarabi, together with a large part of the works of Henry of Ghent, Avicenna, and Scotus Erigena. To these medieval translations he adds ancient Latin translations of the Elements of Theology and Concerning Providence and Fate of Proclus and contemporary translations of the Platonists. These include not only his own works, but also the Defense of Plato of Cardinal Bessarion and "certain speculations" of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. At the very head of the entire list Ficino states that "all the books of Dionysius the Areopagite are Platonist."[5] Since Colet still knew little Greek in 1516, only three years before his death, we argue that it was in the Latin translations of Ficino that he had, as Erasmus tells us, "by no means negligently examined the books of Plato and Plotinus" in England before he left for Italy in about 1492.[6] Colet pretty clearly continued this study of Plato both in Italy and upon his return to England, where Plato and Platonism influenced his Oxford lectures on St. Paul between c. 1496 and c. 1503. However, we will see that Colet had turned against all "heathen philosophers" including the Platonists by the time that he wrote the final form of chapter 10 of his enarratio on I Corinthians. However, he would continue to be influenced by Dionysius, whom Ficino called the culmen Platonicorum, throughout his life. The reason for this was that Colet continued to hold to the medieval belief that this Neoplatonist Christian was the direct convert of his favorite Apostle, St. Paul, mentioned in Acts 17:32, and the best guide to the explication of Pauline thought. In opposition to the views of Frederic Seebohm and Sears Jayne, we have found no evidence in Colet's surviving works that he ceased to accept the authority of Dionysius as an Apostolic Father after Grocyn's criticism in 1502 of his authenticity as Paul's disciple.[7]

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[5] Cf. ibid., pp. 45-47; 36.

The Theological Nature of Colet's Platonism

We have already seen that in the Life of Colet in his letter to Justus Jonas of June 13, 1521, Erasmus gives us all the real information we have regarding Colet's education. He says that during Colet's "younger days in England" he was "industriously and successfully trained" in every one of the traditional seven liberal arts before receiving his M.A., presumably from Oxford. He had also at this time (i.e., between about 1482 and 1492) "mastered all the scholastic philosophy" and engaged in heavy study of the works of Cicero, Plato, and Plotinus, in the tradition of the developing English humanism of the last years of the fifteenth century.[8] He had then visited France and soon afterwards Italy seeking for further knowledge, clearly of the studia humanitatis. But while he was abroad (between about 1492 and 1496) he had only studied the sacri autores.[9] Erasmus also says that Colet had begun to study precisely those ancient theologians, the Church Fathers, in whom the humanists with their ideal of a renaissance of ancient Latin and Greek humane culture (paideia or humanitas) were especially interested. Before leaving England he had already roamed in heavy study through the literae of every kind, but had been most pleased with and decided to make a specialized study of the Christian theologians, preferring the ancient ones, Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. However, he also studied the scholastic theologians, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus "and others of this kidney."[10] By the time that he went abroad in about

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[6] Allen, I, ep. 1211, p. 515.

[7] Cf. Seebohm, pp. 91-93; and Jayne, p. 29.

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[8] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 514-515, lines 263-268. See chapter 2 above on the development of English humanistic studies.

[9] Ibid., p. 515, lines 269-270.

[10] Ibid., lines 270-275.

1492 Colet had decided to spend his time overseas reading only the sacred writers with a strong emphasis on the ancient ones, the Vulgate biblical writers and the early Fathers. He had in fact already become a _vetus_ _theologus_ or "primitive theologian", in Erasmus' phrase. Also, since Erasmus says in his _Life_ that Colet had already made a deep study of both Plato and Plotinus at Oxford, while in 1499 he wrote that when he heard Colet speaking it was as though he were hearing Plato himself, it is clear that in philosophy Colet had also made a considerable study of the Platonist writers both at Oxford and also, it would seem, while abroad. And in fact in Colet's _enarratio_ on _Romans_ which we believe to have been the first of his series of lectures on the Pauline Epistles at Oxford after about 1496, Colet does indeed cite from the works of both Plato and Plotinus.[11]

On the basis of these statements by Erasmus, together with Colet's direct citations from Plato and Plotinus and his quotations from Ficino, Pico, and the Pseudo-Dionysius, Frederic Seebohm maintained that Colet was a Neoplatonist until the time that he heard Grocyn's _exposé_ of Dionysius in about 1498.[12] Since the publication of Seebohm's book of 1867 almost every writer on Colet has discussed his celebrated Neoplatonism without, however, examining it properly. In this chapter therefore, we will make a close examination of Colet's Platonism, and will reach a conclusion regarding the degree to which it influenced his Christian humanist view of ecclesiastical reform.

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[11] He cites Plato in _Enarr_. _Rom_., trans. Lupton, p. 74; and Plotinus in _ibid_., p. 16.

[12] Cf. Seebohm, _op._ _cit._, pp. 90-93.

The secondary material on Colet has usually overlooked the question as to how he was able to study the books of Plato and Plotinus "not negligently" (non oscitanter), in Erasmus' phrase, without by 1516, just three years before his death, having achieved more than a rudimentary knowledge of Greek.[13] The answer, of course, must be that he read the works of both Plato and Plotinus during his student days in Latin translations. These translations were almost without question those of Marsilio Ficino of Florence, whose influential Platonis opera appeared in 1484, about the year Colet probably entered Oxford; and whose translation of the Enneads of Plotinus were first published in 1492, the year before Colet set out on his three year visit to France and Italy from 1493 to 1496.[14] This is made even more probable by the fact that Colet closely paraphrases a long passage from Ficino's Theologia Platonica, which first appeared in 1482, in his Enarratio in Epistola Beati Pauli ad Romanos, which are almost certainly the lectures on Romans that Colet delivered at the beginning of his series of lectures between his return from the

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[13] Allen, IV, p. 515, lines 266-68; II, pp. 257-59, 347, 350.

[14] Cf. Jayne, op. cit., p. 36.

Continent in 1496 and 1503 when he appears to have become acting Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

Colet introduces his paraphrase from the Platonic Theology with the following words:

> To what extent the return of love and charity on our part toward God and his Christ is profitable for us beyond everything else, appears plainly from the words of the Platonist Marsilio Ficino concerning the love of God. They are found in Book XIV of his Platonic Theology, and are for the most part as follows . . .[15]

After the long passage, Colet explains his method of paraphrasing in a highly significant manner:

> This much I have related following Marsilius, concerning the excellency of love, using, however, my own words for the most part as I pleased, and my own manner of writing; not that I dream of being able to express things more fittingly or clearly than Marsilius (than whose language there can be nothing finer in philosophy), but because in my use of freedom of speech, I have taken the liberty of inserting what I wanted in the course of writing, and of giving that turn to the passage which suited my purpose.[16]

Thus already in the Enarratio on Romans, which Lupton dated "about the year 1497", Colet both makes quite clear that he treats Ficino's Theologia Platonica as philosophy and not as theology which derives only from the Sacred Scriptures; and also that he will take considerable liberty in interpreting Ficino's thought to suit his own purpose, which is to understand the thought of St. Paul.

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[15] John Colet, An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, ed. and tr. J. H. Lupton (London: Bell and Daldy, 1873), p.29.

[16] Ibid., p. 32.

In the Codrington Library of All Souls College, Oxford, there is a copy of the first edition of Ficino's Epistolae Familiares (1495). This was clearly originally Colet's own; because it has copious marginalia and underlinings in Colet's handwriting, together with copies by Colet of two letters from Ficino to himself, and two drafts of a letter in reply to Ficino, all written in the back flyleaves.[17] In a previous letter, now lost, Colet had clearly asked Ficino regarding the primacy of love and the will over the intellect, and received the reply, which is totally opposed to his own theology, that the intellectual vision of God is prior to the love of him. Sears Jayne, who has edited these letters and Colet's marginalia, detects a growing impatience with Ficino on the part of Colet as he works through the Epistolae, and an interest only in the theological questions that are dealt with by Ficino in this published correspondence.[18] One section of the Epistolae, however, was paraphrased by Colet in a treatise that appears to form a supplement to Colet's abstracts from the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius in the Emmot manuscript in the St. Paul's School Library. This is the section near the beginning of the Epistolae entitled De raptu Pauli ad tertium caelum, which is cast in the form of a dialogue between St. Paul and the human soul, in which Ficino has Paul describe his mystic experience in his rapture into the third heaven in terms derived from the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius.[19] Ficino's belief was clearly that Dionysius the Areopagite as the disciple of Paul was privileged to learn directly from his master the secrets of the mystical experience described in II Corinthians 12:2-5, and that therefore Paul's experience of the celestial realms is the basis of the ordering of the heavenly spirits in the Celestial Hierarchy.

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[17] Cf. Jayne, passim. The letters are edited and translated by Jayne, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

[18] Ibid., p. 54.

Shortly before the publishing of his Epistolae, Ficino had written (in 1492) a work consisting of Latin translations of the Mystical Theology and On the Divine Names of Dionysius; that is to say, during the very period when Colet was in Italy, where he devoted himself to the early Church Fathers including Dionysius. This work seems to have been read by Colet, and he also paraphrased a Dionysian passage from Ficino's Epistolae of 1495 which appears to be an appendix to his abstracts from the Celestial Hierarchy. We therefore conclude that Colet came to the study of Dionysius through reading the successive publications of Ficino in the Platonist theology. However, Colet's interest in Dionysius was clearly different from that of Ficino, who repeatedly in his works calls him doctrinae Platonicae culmen, "the apex of the Platonist teaching."[20] Colet is interested

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19. Jayne, op. cit., pp. 146-47.

20. Klibansky, op. cit., p. 42.

in Dionysius as the convert upon the Areopagus who can help him understand the mind of Paul, the Apostle whom he "loved so much", and upon whose Epistles he decided to expound at Oxford shortly after his return to England in about 1496.[21]

We have already stated our reasons for believing that Colet's extant lectures on I Corinthians were written later than his enarratio on Romans. There is also reason to believe that Colet was reading the Epistolae of Ficino at the same time that he was lecturing on I Corinthians. For on one of the back flyleaves of his copy of Ficino's Epistolae is the following note, obviously a lecture notice, written in Colet's hand:

> Next Monday, at the usual time and place, John Colet will try to expound as best he can with God's help St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.[22]

In chapter 2 of his enarratio on I Corinthians, Colet makes very clear that he is interested in Dionysius as an apostolicus, an Apostolic Father whose revelatory authority in divine wisdom for the Church is only just below that of the Apostles themselves, and not because of his Neo-Platonist philosophy or "wisdom of this world":

> How unacceptable and hateful to God is the . . wisdom of this world, how opposite and contrary to the divine wisdom, and therefore how despised and rejected by Him may be perceived from this: that it was not God's will that the mysteries of his wisdom and goodness should be either chiefly heard or chiefly preached by the wise and powerful; but should rather be both

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[21] Olin, pp. 177, 178.

[22] Jayne, p. 130.

> received and handed down by those who were utterly devoid of that dark wisdom which the human reason establishes. And if at times God willed that the truths of his heavenly wisdom should be received and handed on to others by anyone who was endowed with worldly wisdom, such as St. Paul and his disciple Dionysius and few others -- these men, when preparing to proclaim to others what they learnt from God, made nothing so much their . . . care, as to be thought by others to have no worldly wisdom. For they considered it unworthy that human reason should be confused with divine revelation; nor did they wish to have it thought that the truth was believed through the persuasion of men rather than through the power of God.[23]

In chapter 10 of the same Lectures Colet launches into a general attack against all heathen philosophers as "companions of demons":

> We ought to banquet with Christ alone, at the choice table of the Scriptures, and feast most plentifully with Him in the New Testament . . . At other tables, I mean the books of heathen authors in which there is nothing that tastes of Christ and nothing that does not taste of the Devil . . . no Christian should sit, unless he chooses to be the guest of the Devil rather than of the Lord. For as are the pastures so are the cattle, and as a man eats so he grows. If we try to feed on the wisdom of the heathens, which is of the Devil, we lose the reason of our Lord . . . if any should say, as is often said, that to read heathen authors assists the understanding of the Holy Scriptures, let them reflect whether such reliance on them does not make them a chief obstacle to understanding the Holy Scriptures by grace alone and prayer and the assistance of Christ and of faith . . . Those books in which Christ is not found are but the table of devils. Do not read the philosophers, the devils' companions. In the choice and well-stored

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[23] John Colet, An Exposition of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, ed. and tr. J. H. Lupton (London: Bell and Sons, 1874), pp. 18-19.

> table of the sacred writings are contained everything that pertains to the truth.[24]

Since in his earlier Enarratio on Romans, Colet in fact cited with approval "heathen philosophers" Plato and Plotinus, it appears that by the time he came to write his exposition of I Corinthians, he had begun to revolt against the Platonist philosophy and non-Christian philosophy in general.[25] This revolt was probably caused by his realization of the strongly pagan elements in the thought of Ficino, the leading contemporary Latin Platonist, about whose language he had said in his lectures on Romans "there can be nothing finer in philosophy."[26] Colet now no longer agreed with St. Augustine that the Platonist philosophers were the best approach to the Christian Gospel.[27]

Nevertheless, the influence of the Pseudo-Dionysius, whom Ficino so often calls culmen Platonicorum and equivalent terms, clearly continues as a major influence upon Colet's thought not only in his abstracts of Dionysius' own Celestial and Ecclesiastical; but also upon Colet's Opus de sacramentis Ecclesiae, his lectures on I Corinthians and his short tract entitled Concerning the Mystical

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[24] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

[25] He cites Plato in Enarr. Rom., tr. Lupton, p. 74; and Plotinus in ibid., p. 16.

[26] See note 10 supra.

[27] This view is stated by Augustine in the De Civitate Dei and elsewhere, and was based upon his own experience of reaching Christianity via Neoplatonism."

Body of Christ, Which is the Church. This influence is also evident in the fragments which survive of his sermon preached at St. Paul's on the occasion of Wolsey's receiving the red hat of the cardinalate in late 1515, and one of his last letters to Erasmus which P. S. Allen dates in about June, 1517.[28]

How, then, are we to explain this continuing influence upon Colet's theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, who would soon be described by Luther as "more Platonist than Christian," in the period of his life after his stern command to his auditors at Oxford to avoid the books of the heathen philosophers, "companions of devils"? The answer to this problem is given by Erasmus. For Colet, Dionysius was the earliest of all the *prisci theologi*, the Church Fathers who carried on the apostolic tradition which the original apostles received directly from the Holy Spirit after the Resurrection of Christ. In chapter 6 of his abstracts from the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* Colet explains that he considers the Dionysian writings to have been the written form of a secret mystical or spiritual oral tradition intended for the Christian spiritual élite only and surpassing in importance the written Scriptures, which Dionysius the Areopagite derived directly by word of mouth from St. Paul. For in his attempt to explain the historical fact that the institutions and ceremonies of the Church of his own day are different from those described in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius, which he believed to be the institutions of the Church of the Apostolic Age, Colet placed the blame upon the Bishops, who, according to Dionysius, are responsible for maintaining the Christian tradition by their succession from the original apostles. Colet writes:

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[28] Cf. Allen, II, ep. 593, where Colet recommends the threefold Dionysian mystical way of purification, illumination, and perfection or deification to Erasmus the best way to imitate Christ, and the way he himself intends to follow as long as his life lasts. Colet's short tract of mystical ecclesiology *De compositione sancti corporis Christi mystici, quae est ecclesia; quae sine anima ejus, Spiritu scilicet, dispergitur et dissipatur* has been printed in John Colet, *Opuscula quaedam theologica*, ed. J. H. Lupton (London: George Bell, 1876), pp. 185-195.

> I do not know by what rashness of the bishops in later ages the ancient custom of Dionysius fell into disuse of initiating and consecrating not only monks, but all other orders of the clergy , a custom which owing to its apostolic institution had the very highest authority and was most religiously observed in the ancient Church. Nor do I know by what rashness on the part of mankind, a different custom with new symbols and ceremonies grew up and prevailed, to such an extent that in the present Church not even a trace appears of a matter of the most revered antiquity and the most sacred institution by the Apostles. For had not St. Dionysius who seems to me to have played the part in our Church that Ezra did in the Mosaic synagogue, who desired that the mysteries of the Old Law should be committed to writing, lest in the turbulence of affairs and men the memory of such great wisdom should perish -- had not the divine Dionysius in similar fashion, as though he guessed the future carelessness of mankind, left in writing from his productive pen what he remembered of the apostolic statutes for the arrangement and regulation of the Church, we would have no record of the ancient custom. For to have departed from the ancient custom in our own time is a thing greatly to be mourned over . . . for it would be strange indeed if the Apostles had not best understood the meaning of the sacred symbols since all things were revealed to them by the Holy Spirit; so that they could not fail to understand wisely . . . how with just propriety to portray spiritual truths under their appropriate signs. How it happened, without grievous sin, that these signs afterwards became totally changed, I do not

> know; for we must believe that it was through the Holy Spirit that the apostles learnt everything which they instituted in the Church.[29]

Colet's Program for the Reformation of the Church

Almost all of Colet's extant theological writings, including his method of Scriptural exposition, is in fact influenced by the spiritualizing or mystical theology of Dionysius; and this includes his programme for the reformation of the early sixteenth-century English Church as outlined in his Oratio ad clerum in convocatione preached on February 6, 1511/1512. In this work, which we will examine below, Colet's theological ideals for the spiritual reformation of the Church are stated in practical terms. But throughout most of Colet's works, his teaching regarding the way mankind should imitate and return to God is based upon the threefold mystical way of the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius. According to this way to deification, common to all the Greek Fathers, all creation images the Trinity to whom all things are drawn in imitation of His triunity, until everything existent shall be unified and perfected in God who will then be truly "all things in everything." (I Cor. 15:28). This "short way" to Christian perfection through ardent love and the imitation of Christ is specifically recommended by Colet to Erasmus in 1517 instead of reading such esoteric books as the De Arte Caballistica of Reuchlin.[30] According to this mystic way, of which the seven sacraments are merely the convenient symbols of spiritual grace, as the Apostles, especially St. Paul, told Dionysius, and Dionysius wrote down in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, we must first through a catharsis or purgation which is symbolized by the symbols of the sacrament of Penance, cast off the old carnal man and be recreated in the image of God by the power which is the especial property of the Father. This purgation makes us whole, one in ourselves, and for the first time we participate in true being, the Being of God and thus acquire from God the first theological virtue of hope. The second stage in this "short road" to perfection is the illumination of our minds by the spiritual rays of grace which stream from Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness." These infuse the second divine virtue of faith into us. This spiritual illumination of the soul is symbolized for still carnal men by the material rites of Baptism, which Dionysius more correctly calls the sacrament of illumination. Our faith in Christ, which is the human response to this spiritual illumination by God, is vouched for on behalf of the child at Baptism by his godparent. It is furthermore confirmed in adolescence for the carnal laity by the symbolic rite of Confirmation. Finally, all Christians must become perfect and as similar to God as is possible for their various natures in the ecclesiastical hierarchy which is the Church. This takes place through the final mystical infusion of love, the special operation of God the Holy Spirit. This final and perfecting infusion of the Holy Spirit or grace is signified by the material or carnal rites or symbolic systems of the Eucharist and Extreme Unction.

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[29] Colet, Super opera Dionysii, tr. by Lupton as Two Treatises on the Hierarchies of Dionysius, ed. Lupton (London: Bell and Daldy, 1869), pp. 135-136

[30] Allen, II, ep. 593, p. 599.

As well as these five, there are the sacraments of matrimony and ordination. In his theological writings Colet says that carnal matrimony should be avoided, for St. Paul had said it is only permitted by God as an indulgence for sin. Colet holds it is merely a material symbol of the mystical or true marriage of Christ and his Church described in Ephesians.[31] The true sacrament of matrimony is therefore wholly spiritual. But the most important of all these sacraments or material signs of the divine grace is that of ordination to the three major orders of clergy: bishops, priests, and deacons. These clergy, Dionysius says, make up the three highest grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy on earth. Therefore the Church militant should obey in hierarchical order the leadership of the bishops, especially that *summus pontifex* or highest bishop "whom we are accustomed to call the pope." For only in this way will the Church below reflect so far as it can the three hierarchies of the celestial angels who themselves image by their hierarchic orders the triunity of God to the highest degree of perfection possible to their natures. It is thus the influence of the *Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies* of Dionysius which causes Colet to follow the medieval tradition of a very sharp separation between the spirituality or *sacerdotium* and the lower, more carnal, order of the laity. Leland Miles is thus inaccurate to state that Colet anticipates Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.[32] The *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of

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[31] Ephesians 5:21-33.

[32] L. Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition*, pp. 209-210.

Dionysius for Colet, as for medieval theology, was a main theological bulwark for the maintainance of the superiority of the clergy including those in minor orders, to the laity. Consequently it was no chance that Luther, building on the criticisms of Nicholas of Cusa, Valla, and Erasmus demolished the subapostolic authority of Dionysius in the same work _On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church_ of 1520 in which he abrogated the distinction between clergy and laity with his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. In this same work he also reduced the medieval sacramental system for which Dionysius was supposed to be the "ancient" anthority to Baptism and the Eucharist, the two sacraments instituted by Christ himself according to the New Testament.[33] Colet, on the contrary, since he accepted the subapostolic authority of Dionysius, maintains in the Convocation Sermon that the lowest cleric in minor orders is higher than the King of England or the Holy Roman Emperor, so that the traditional, but much abused, "benefit of clergy" is in principle fully justified. As we will show below this was precisely the position which he maintained in his Convocation Sermon on the reformation of the Church, basing it upon the pulchra ordo hierarchicus of the Church, as it is described in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius.[34]

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[33] Cf. Martin Luther, _Three Treatises_ (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 240ff. For Valla's criticism of the subapostolic authority of Dionysius as St. Paul's disciple, see Pierre Mesnard, "Une application curieuse de l'humanisme critique à la théologie: l'Éloge de saint Thomas par Laurent Valla," _Revue Thomiste_, _55_ (1955), pp. 175-176, which translates Valla's _Encomium Sancti Thomae Aquinatis_ of 1457. Valla's criticism, however, is extremely mild and based upon his application of the humanist historical method to his reading of the early Church Fathers. He says that so far as he has been able to discover, Gregory the Great is the first early Latin Father to mention "Dionysius called the Areopagite". Nor do any of the early Greek Fathers mention his works. Humanistic study of the early Fathers was bound to come to this conclusion eventually. Erasmus seems to have been convinced by Grocyn's exposé of 1501-1502; although he had read many of the works of Valla before this. Erasmus believed that Luther's attack on Dionysius was yet another example of his carrying to extremes some of his own criticisms of contemporary superstitions. In his letter to Justus Jonas of May 10, 1521, he wrote: "I have taught somewhere that the best authors [_optimos autores_] should be read first, adding that as much profit may not be gained from the books of Dionysius as their titles appear to promise. Luther, I hear, calls the man absurd and unworthy to be read at all." Allen, IV, ep. 1202, pp. 491-92, lines 223-226.

Colet's thinking in this regard precisely reflects that of Dionysius, which he believed, because of his supposed oral communication with his master, interpreted the ecclesiological thought of St. Paul. The clergy, who in a Church truly re-formed to the image of Christ would be totally spiritual men, are by that very fact formed by God into a hierarchy. Therefore the status of the lowest member of the clergy is in the cosmic order or Great Chain of Being higher than the very highest members of the carnal lay order "other the kynges or emperours," the lowest order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; whereas the truly spiritual men among the clerical hierarchy, at the apex of which is the "highest bishop" or pope, are "egall with the dignite of angels." It is in fact precisely because Colet holds, following Dionysius, the exalted medieval view of the bishops as the high priests (pontifices) who most imitate on earth the life of Jesus, and who as hierarchs structure his Church into a beautiful and harmonious hierarchical order, that Colet in his Convocation Sermon looks to the bishops for the beginnings of the reformation of the whole order of the Church. First they should reform themselves and return to their true function as hierarchs; then, by imitation of their example the reformation of the priests and the laity will follow:

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[34] See Chapter 7 below.

> For sooth if you bishops keep the laws, and if you first reform your own lives in accordance with the rules of the Canon Law, then you will give us priests light, in which illumination we will be able to see what we must do on our part -- that is to say, the light of your good example. And we, seeing you, our fathers, keeping the canon laws, will gladly follow in the footsteps of our fathers.
>
> The clerical and spiritual part once reformed in the Church, then may we in just order proceed to the reformation of the lay part, which will truly be very easy to do if we clergy are first reformed. For the body follows the soul, and as the rulers are in the city, so also are the citizens in it. Therefore if priests who have the charge of souls are good, immediately the people will be good. Our [example of] goodness shall teach them more clearly to be good than any other teaching or preaching . . . Therefore, if you wish the lay people to live after your . . will, first live yourselves after God's will, and then, trust me, you will easily obtain from them whatever you wish.[35]

Colet's words here exactly parallel a passage regarding the episcopal office in chapter 2 of his exposition of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius. There he had written:

> While Christ lived as a mortal man in the flesh, he performed the episcopal office himself, teaching its duties in actual practice. At that time there was salvation through believing in him who was present. When, however, after he had shown the true form of a bishop, our good and patient high priest [or bishop] offered himself as a propitiary sacrifice to God, then

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[35] See the Convocation Sermon in Lupton, op. cit., p. 302

> there began to be salvation through those bishops who discharged the work of Jesus in his place. . . For God was in Christ, and Christ was in his Apostles and the successors of his Apostles, the bishops. . . Therefore every bishop in the Church. . . acts the part of God and Christ. . . Under the bishop, priests occupy the place of the Apostles; and under these, deacons are ministers to the faithful laity. . . For the bishop is as it were the messenger midway between God and men, to announce to men the heavenly things as Christ did. . .[36]

In both his Convocation Sermon of February 1511/12 and in the reformed statutes for St. Paul's Cathedral which he presented to Wolsey as papal legate in 1518, Colet hoped to bring about a conservative reformation of the Church under episcopal leadership by means of renewed obedience to her ancient canon laws. However, these attempts proved to be failures. Despite a widespread personal admiration for him in London, his only really successful reform along the lines of the Christian humanist programme was the rebuilding and reconstituting of the ancient grammar school of St. Paul's Cathedral in an attempt to improve education along Christian humanist lines. Erasmus tells us that by means of this school Colet planned to raise up a better educated, more religious, and more virtuous younger generation who would eventually effect the reform of English life in both Church and State.

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[36] Colet, In Eccl. Hier., c. 2, pp. 63-64.

And it is as the founder of the "new school of Paul's" that Colet is best remembered today; even though this re-foundation was not as original as was once thought.[37]

However, before we state our final conclusions as to the effectiveness of Colet's attempts at Catholic reform just before the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, we will in the next chapter analyze in detail his one extant sermon, preached before the Convocation of Canterbury on February 6, 1511/1512. In this he specifically states his practical views of the way in which the long-awaited reform of the Church should be brought about. We will find that this appeal for ecclesiastical reform follows the traditional lines, and that it certainly does not present Colet as "a happy promoter" of the Protestant Reformation "who alarmed this nation first toward the throwing off the yoke of superstition and popery."[38]

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37. Cf. A. F. Leach, "St. Paul's School before Colet," *Archaeologia*, *62* (1910), pp. 191-238, which shows conclusively that Colet's school was a re-foundation of the medieval Grammar School. This has been traced back to the early twelfth century by Leach, but was probably founded earlier still.

38. Samuel Knight, *Life of Colet* (Oxford, 1823), p. xv. This view has recently reappeared, in an extreme form, in Leland Miles' "Protestant Colet and Catholic More: A Study of Contrast in the Use of Platonism," *Anglican Theological Review*, *33* (1951), pp. 29-43.

Chapter Seven

THE ORATIO HABITA AD CLERUM IN CONVOCATIONE

PART I

Colet's understanding of the way in which the Church in England should be reformed is stated most clearly in the sermon which he delivered at the request of Archbishop Warham at the opening of the Canterbury Convocation on February 6, 1511/1512.[1] Before the papal reform of the calendar during the sixteenth century, the year was dated from March to March so that although it was dated 1511 by Pynson, in modern reckoning the sermon's date was February 6,1511/1512. Samuel Knight who transcribed the original Latin from a copy of the printed sermon in the Bodleian dated it 1511.[2] J. H. Lupton correctly dated this Convocation of the Southern province as beginning in February 1511/1512, and supported his argument by pointing out that in April and May 1511, an active investigation into heresy in his diocese had been held by William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury. The revival of heresy of which Colet speaks, was the main agenda before the Convocation. Frederick Seebohm dated the sermon as having been given on February 6, 1512.[3] A. G. Dickens has recently held that the assembly, which was a provincial council,

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1. S. Knight, Life of Colet (1823), p. 237.
2. Lupton, Life, pp. 178-179.
3. Seebohm, op. cit., p. 224.

took place in 1510, but he has mistaken the Convocation at which Colet spoke.[4] The confusion about the date springs in part from inaccuracy regarding transposition from the old style of dating into the form which has been accepted since the late sixteenth century. It appears certain that the beginning of this meeting, which is described in the later English translation of Colet's sermon as "the Conuocacion at Paulis", in fact began on February 6, 1511 in the Old Style, and Dickens has confused two different Convocations which were called by Warham to meet at St. Paul's. This agrees with both the original Latin manuscript of the sermon quoted by both Knight and the Short Title Catalogue which shows it was originally dated 1511, or 1511/1512, New Style.

Warham's summons of the clergy of the Southern Province of Canterbury to a provincial council for January 26, 1510, dwells upon the hostile attitude of the English laity to the clergy and to the rights and liberties of the Church. It is certain that the feeling between the temporality and the spirituality had become very bitter by the beginning of the sixteenth century. This bitterness[4a] was to become especially evident at the Parliament which met in 1515, after a Richard Hunne, a substantial London citizen and merchant tailor, was found dead in the Bishop of London's prison at St. Paul's Cathedral on December 4, 1514, evidently murdered by two of the London diocese servants of William Horsey, the Bishop's chancellor, and a judge for Hunne's ecclesiastical court. Hunne's offence, whether he was murdered or driven to suicide, was that in the previous year he had instituted a suit in the court of King's Bench against Thomas Dryffeld and other clergy for offending against the statutes of Praemunire. This suit which raised a difficult question of jurisdiction had been repeatedly adjourned, probably at government request, on a point of law. The final adjournment was from Michaelmas (autumn) Term 1514 until Hilary Term, 1515, by which time Hunne was dead. For in the meantime Hunne had been arrested on a charge of heresy by Richard Fitzjames, Bishop of London, who in 1513 had also charged Colet with heresy. Hunne was arrested at Fitzjames' order and placed in his prison known as "the Lollards' Tower." A search of his house, it was later claimed, yielded some heretical books including a Wycliffite Bible, which was later used at Hunne's posthumous trial for heresy at St. Paul's. According to Ogle, this Bible, now at Cambridge, was "planted" on Hunne after his murder. After his death a clerical court condemned Hunne's body to be burnt as that of a relapsed heretic and all his goods were confiscated, thereby impoverishing his family. However, the lay coroner's jury which was empowered to investigate the case refused to return a verdict of suicide since, they deposed, the body and the state of the cell showed evident signs that Hunne had been strangled before his neck had been broken. A long examination was made of those able to trace the movements of the persons involved in the case including Horsey's gaoler Charles Joseph who eventually confessed that he had strangled Hunne and had fled earlier to sanctuary rather than face examination. The jury finally returned a verdict of wilful murder against Horsey, the Bishop's chancellor, and two of his servants, one of whom was the gaoler Joseph. Through the intervention of Wolsey and Henry VIII the case was left as it had been decided by the spiritual court, despite the fact that Hunne could hardly have been a relapsed heretic since he had not had the opportunity to recant. The efforts on the part of the Commons in the Parliament of 1515-16 on behalf of Hunne showed that the case clearly derived from the conditions which Colet had hoped to heal by his Convocation Sermon. It played an important role in increasing the already considerable hatred between the laity and the clergy after 1515. This anticlerical feeling came to the surface in full force in the Parliament which met in 1529 immediately after Wolsey's fall. Before it was dissolved in 1536 this "Reformation Parliament" passed acts which would bring not only the ecclesiastical courts but the entire Church in England under the control of the King.[5]

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[4] A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation, p. 90. In the footnote to his discussion of the Convocation Sermon Dickens refers to Wilkins' Concilia, III, 651. This is a transcription from Burnet's History of the Reformation, vol. I, app. p. 6, of the mandate for a Convocation to meet on January 26, 1509/1510. The reference to the Convocation at which Colet preached on February 6, 1511/1512 is given at Wilkins, III, p. 652.

[4a] The extremely bad feeling between the London laity and the clergy is very evident in all the documents of the time. It has recently been argued that clerical morale, which had fallen very low, was strengthened by the bull Supernae Dispositionis of the Fifth Lateran Council. D. S. Chambers and M. J. Kelly, "English Bishops and the Fifth Lateran Council" in R. J. Schoeck, ed. Studies in the Fifth Lateran Council, to appear shortly from the University of Toronto Press.

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[5] For the Hunne Affair see A. Ogle, *The Tragedy of the Lollards' Tower*, *passim*; S. F. M. Milsom, "Richard Hunne's 'Praemunire'," *English Historical Review*, LXXVI (1961), 80-82; and Dickens, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-96. Ogle's examination supersedes earlier accounts, but needs to be corrected in the light of Milsom's article.

But the bad feeling between clergy and laity had only been exacerbated by the Hunne case. Anticlericalism in England had been strong since the fifteenth century. An understanding of this mutual bad feeling between clergy and laity is necessary for a true understanding of Colet's sermon on Church reformation. It was an outspoken eleventh-hour warning to the clergy of the Southern Province to amend their lives and doctrine to the old ideals if they wished to overcome the bitterness and the resultant disobedience on the part of the laity.

This is made quite clear by the fact that before the beginning of the Hunne case. Archbishop Warham had previously summoned the clergy of his province together on January 26, 1510 to discuss the hostile attitude of the laity and the rights of the Church. At the similar Convocation held in the next year, Warham asked Colet as Dean of St. Paul's to deliver the opening sermon. Colet was apparently expected to discuss the relation between the clergy and the laity and the problem of heresy. It is now clear that there was a resurgence of Lollardy in England at the end of the fifteenth and the first two decades of the sixteenth century. In 1510 Bishop Fitzjames had had forty people brought before his episcopal court charged with heresy, and in 1511 he ordered two burnt as relapsed heretics. This meant that they had been previously charged with heresy, had abjured it before an ecclesiastical court, and had then returned to it again. At an inquisition held by Archbishop Warham at Ashford, Kent, in his own diocese of Canterbury between April and September 1511, forty-six heretics were denounced to the archbishop, of whom forty-one abjured their erroneous opinions and were admitted to penance while the other four were burnt, also as "relapsed" heretics.[6]

It was in these circumstances, and probably also influenced by the conciliabulum of Pisa and the preparation for the Fifth Lateran Council with their programs for Church reform that Colet preached his celebrated Convocation Sermon ad clerum on the subject of the necessity for reformation of the Church.[6a]

The Growth of Lay Anticlericalism by 1511 and Its Significance

Whether Colet's only complete surviving sermon was delivered in 1510/11 or 1511/12, there is no question that it was printed in 1511 by Richard Pynson.[7] An English translation of this sermon was also issued by Thomas Berthelet, the royal printer, but unfortunately without date. Lupton printed this from a copy in the archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth numbered "30.9.22" and assigned to the year 1511, but the Short Title Catalogue dates the translation in 1530, and in fact it could not have been printed before February 22, 1530, the date on which Berthelet received his patent as *regius impressor*. Also, the sermon was almost certainly translated into English by Colet's pupil, Thomas Lupset, who seems to have been born in 1495 and was thus only about sixteen at the time that Colet delivered it before Convocation. Lupton thought that Colet had translated the sermon himself but this is unlikely.[8] Not only is the translation not entirely faithful to the original Latin, but in Edward Braynewode's list of Lupset's writings in John Bale's "Index" he states regarding Lupset that "*Coleti sermones ad clerum transtulit*." Lupton was thus wrong to think that the translation was printed as early as 1511 and to believe that it was made by Colet himself. W. W. Greg dated the English version of the sermon "before November, 1531." Not only is this the only one of Colet's translated sermons which remains; but it has been shown by J. A. Gee that the English style of the translation shows great similarity to other English works of Lupset.[9] The importance of establishing this later date of 1530 or 1531 for the printing of the translation is that it supports the internal evidence of the Sermon itself that Colet's intention was to call the clergy to reformation within their own Synodal assembly, but not to broadcast their misdoings which are castigated with extreme candour. It is probable that the Sermon was translated into English by Lupset and published for lay consumption in about 1530 or 1531 when the Reformation Parliament was beginning to attack clerical abuses after Wolsey's fall.

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[6] Cf. John Foxe, Acts and Monuments, V, 648-52; P. Hughes, The Reformation in England, I, pp. 127-28; Thomson, The Later Lollards, pp. 186-91.

[6a] The "Council of Pisa" had begun to meet on November 1, 1511. To counter its effect, since it had the support of Louis XII, Julius II had on July 25, 1511, summoned a Council to meet at Rome on April 19, 1512. This was the Fifth Lateran Council, the sessions of which would last until 1517. It would seem clear that Colet's reformation sermon to the meeting of the most important English Synod was preached with the hopes of effective reform from the legitimate, papally called Lateran Council in mind. Cf. P. Hughes, History of the Church, III, p. 421.

[7] Cf. J. A. Gee, The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), p. 169. The printed Latin version was entitled "Oratio Habita a D. Ioanne Colet Decano Sancti Pauli ad Clerum in Conuocatione, Anno.M.D.xi [sic] Apud Rich. Pynson, Anno Virginei Partus, MCCCCCXI."

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[8] Lupton, Life of Colet, p. 293.

[9] Cf. Gee, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-70; W. W. Greg, Hand-Lists of Books Printed by London Printers in 1501-1556, III (London, 1905), p. 14. Gee points out that Lupset's habit of beginning sentences with the words "For," "Therefore," and "Wherefore" is very noticeable in this translation. But "more significant than . . . these similarities is the fact that the sentences of this translation resemble, in their carefully-wrought coherence and in their balance and rhythm, those of Lupset's treatises." Cf. Pollard and Redgrave, Short Title Catalogue, No. 5550.

The Convocation Sermon is so outspoken in its attack upon those abuses that Bishop Burnet and J. H. Blunt looked upon it as an opening act of the English Reformation, while Lupton considered that it marked "an epoch in the history of the English Church."[10] These estimates are clearly exaggerated, but it does seem clear that Colet's call for reformation of the clergy as the best and, indeed, only approach to overcoming the hatred of the laity did in fact constitute a last opportunity for the clergy to put their house in order before the Hunne Affair, which in fact began as early as March 29, 1511/12. This case began a series of events which, together with the papal frustration of the "King's Great Matter," would lead to the destruction of the separate jurisdiction of the clergy in

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[10] Lupton, op. cit., p. 178. Burnet said "when I writ my history of the Reformation I had Dr. Colet's sermon in my hands, and once I intended to have published it, as a piece that might open the scene, and to show the state of things at the first beginnings of the Reformation. But I was diverted from it by those under whose direction I put that work." Gilbert Burnet, Reflections, p. 5 in The Phoenix, II (1708), p. iv, as cited by Lupton, p. 179. J. H. Blunt, Reformation of the Church of England, 2 vols. (London, 1897), I, 10-18, quotes almost the entire sermon. These views have built up the belief Colet was a Protestant before the Reformation,

England and to the proclamation that the King and not the pope was "so far as the law of Christ allows" the Head of the Church of England. It has been shown by Ogle and Dickens that the Hunne Affair so raised the animosities of the Commons against the clergy in the Parliament of 1515-1516 that following the fall of Wolsey the Commons of the Parliament which began in 1529 was able under the leadership of Thomas Cromwell to persuade an already embittered Henry VII to support bills originating in the totally lay House of the Commons, which by 1533 had effectively ended the authority of the Roman Church in England.[11]

The extreme importance of the questions of church reform and the relations between the clergy and the laity at the time Colet preached his reformation sermon can be seen from the Tree of Commonwealth which was written in 1509-10 when its author Edmund Dudley, one of the leading lay ministers of the previous reign, was in the Tower of London awaiting execution by Henry VIII. Since this work remained unprinted until about a century ago, it could not itself have affected public opinion at the

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as maintained by Leland Miles in his "Protestant Colet and Catholic More: A Study of Contrast in the Use of Platonism," Anglican Theological Review, XXXIII (1951), 29-43 and his John Colet and the Platonic Tradition (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1961).

[11] For Henry VIII's increasing bitterness against the papacy after 1527, as he found that Charles V's control over the papacy was preventing Clement VII's agreement to the annulment of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon, see Hughes, Ref. in England, I, pp. 156f. The attitude of the lay House of Commons to the clergy in 1529 and throughout the Reformation Parliament is described by A. Ogle, Tragedy of the Lollards' Tower, pp. 173 f. Ogle also shows the great importance of the Hunne case for the developing anti-clericalism of the laity, especially the class represented by the Commons after 1515. Wolsey both controlled and yet also

time it was written; nevertheless it throws important light upon the view of a non-Lollard lay lawyer and former government official on the King's proper role with regard to Church and State at this time and it clearly foreshadows the coming Royal Supremacy. Before anyone in England had ever heard of Luther, and just before Colet's reformation sermon, Dudley was arguing that church reform had become an urgent task which must be pursued under royal guidance. For the King was not merely the protector but also the overseer of the English Church, since he in fact appointed the bishops (despite the formality of papal provisions) and was responsible for making them carry out their duties in the punishment of wrong-doers. It is also the King's task to bring about concord within his realm by adjudging disputes between the clergy and the laity; "no man can do it but the Prince."[12] Dudley's work makes clear a growing feeling by 1511 that the problems of the ecclesia Anglicana would have to be handled in England herself, and that lay common lawyers believed that the King should have an increased control over the Church even before Wolsey's abuses of his enormous powers as Cardinal legate de latere after 1518 vastly increased English anti-clericalism and anti-papalism.

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aggravated this anti-clericalism. The importance of Thomas Cromwell for the development of the policy of the omnicompetent State and the parliamentary statutes which legalised the Royal Supremacy is shown by both Ogle and G. R. Elton, The Tudor Revolution in Government (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 71 f. Cf. A. G. Dickens, Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation (London, 1959), pp. 52f., and Ogle, op. cit., p. 173f. Ogle was the first to show the real importance of Cromwell for the "Tudor revolution in government" which was also the "Henrician Reformation"; but Elton, who generally agrees with his conclusions, rightly remarks that Ogle's argument is marred by extravagance. Elton, p. 94, note.

[12] Cf. Edmund Dudley, The Tree of Commonwealth, ed. D. M. Brodie (London, 1948). Cf. A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation, p. 89.

Colet's Convocation Sermon of February 6, 1511/1512 on the Necessity of the Reformation of the Church

Colet's sermon to the most important gathering in council of the English clergy, which was not stripped of its considerable legal powers until 1533, was extremely brave and outspoken and was probably an important factor behind the charges of heresy which Fitzjames and other bishops attempted to bring against the Dean in the following year. It is also certain that Colet read Wycliffite books and seems to have been sympathetic to some of their teachings was probably still more important.[13] Colet had decided that a root examination of the ills of the English Church and a strong appeal for reformation to the prelates met in Convocation was the only way of reconciling the dangerous antagonism between the clergy and the laity and the growth of heretical or Lollard opinions among respectable and orthodox laity. He saw clearly the connection between lay disgust at the worldliness of the clergy and the resurgence of heretical Lollard opinions. This is evidently what Erasmus meant when he said that Colet gained a great deal from Wyclif's books although he was not (so far as Erasmus knew) a Lollard himself. During the fifteenth century, after the political suppression of Lollardy by Henry IV and Henry V, a frightened clergy had begun to use the charge of heresy as a counter to any complaints whatever against them by an increasingly literate laity, who were coming to see ever more clearly both that the ancient privileges of the spirituality were outdated and that their order was in great need of reform. This reform did not seem to be forthcoming, and certainly would not be initiated by popes like Alexander VI and Julius II. The English kings had refused to accept their argument of the common lawyers that the ecclesiastical courts were _ipso facto_ foreign to England. This policy was continued during the early part of the reign of Henry VIII, who prided himself on his doctrinal orthodoxy, until Wolsey failed to extract from Clement VII the promised annulment of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon. That many clerical charges of heresy against the laity could be extreme at about the time Colet preached his Convocation sermon is shown by the behavior of Fitzjames in 1515 when he wrote to Wolsey that

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[13] In his biographical epistle to Justus Jonas, Erasmus says that Colet read a wide variety of heretical books and maintained that often more profit was to be gained from them than from "the books of those who so define everything as often to flatter their party leaders, and not seldom their own selves as well." (Olin, p. 186). Colet was evidently referring to scholastic philosophy and theology of all schools, since he was even more opposed to Aquinas than to Scotus. Ockhamism which does not appear to have been strong in England by the late-

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fifteenth century, would of course "defined everything" still more than the Thomists and Scotists, but is not mentioned by Erasmus. Although Erasmus says that Colet's "opinions differed widely from those commonly received," he clearly states that those opinions which were "derived from Dionysius and other early theologians" never contravened in any way the decrees of the Canon Law. (Olin, pp. 186, 182-3, 185). This agrees entirely with the tremendous respect for the Canon Law which Colet shows in his Convocation sermon, and the kind of reformation for which he appeals is based entirely upon it. Colet's will, and Erasmus' colloquy _Peregrinatio religionis ergo_, in which the character Gratianus Pullus has been conclusively shown to have been based on Colet, and the frequenting of his sermons by Lollards all point to a certain sympathy on the part of Colet with that aspect of Wycliffism which attacked the worldliness of the clergy. However, when Menedemus in the colloquy says that he gathers that Gratianus Pullus was "some Wycliffite," Ogygius replies, "I don't think so, though he had read his books." C. R. Thompson, ed. _The Colloquies of Erasmus_, p. 305. Like many Englishmen at this time Colet probably agreed with certain of the reformatory teachings of Lollardy without being himself a Lollard. But such views would have been quite enough to cause a man like Fitzjames to charge him with heresy. The real problem was that the moderate side of the Wycliffite reform program had not been acted on by the clergy during the fifteenth century.

no jury of twelve men could be found in the City of London that was not so "maliciously set *in favorem haereticae pravitatis* that they will cast and condemn my clarcke [i.e., Horsey] though he were as innocent as Abel."[14] Furthermore, in a speech to the House of Lords in 1515 when a bill was introduced to restore Hunne's property to his family, Fitzjames stated that the coroner's jury who had sat on the case were "false perjured caitiffs." That this statement was extreme is made abundantly clear by the fact that the Mayor and Corporation of London at once sent a delegation to see him as their bishop and to remonstrate with him for what they called his "perillous and haynous wordes" which reflected upon the orthodoxy of the entire city of London.[15] In a speech to the House of Lords in the Parliament of 1515 when a bill was introduced to restore the dead and condemned Hunne's property to his children, Fitzjames went so far as to make the absurd statement, "I dare not kepe myne owne house for heretiques."[16] The whole atmosphere of the Parliament of 1515-1516 and the bills drafted by the House of Commons which met in 1529 immediately after the fall of the powerful Wolsey from the Chancellorship makes clear that there was a bitter hatred between the laity and the clergy, which centered upon the City of London, where Colet was preaching and carrying out his ministry.

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[14] Cf. E. Jeffries Davis, "The Authorities for the Case of Richard Hunne, 1514-1515," *EHR*, *30* (1915), p. 477. The chronicler Edward Hall, or his printer, changed Fitzjames' phrase "my clarcke" to "any clarcke," and the mistake was repeated until Miss Jeffries Davis pointed it out in this article.

[15] Ogle, *op. cit.*, p. 83. Cf. also E. Jeffries Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

[16] T. M. Parker, *The English Reformation to 1558* (London, 1963), p. 22.

The central thrust of Colet's Convocation Sermon stands in the tradition that reform of the Church must begin with the heads (the bishops) who must convoke frequent meetings of ecclesiastical councils at all levels, general, provincial, and diocesan. The hierarchy of the *ecclesia Anglicana* must reform itself of its well-known abuses by a return to the precepts of the canon law if it is to regain its rightful control over the spiritual lives of the laity. Colet told the assembled Convocation:

> In this tyme also we perceyue contradiction [against us] of the laye people. But they are nat so moche contraye vnto vs, as we are our selfe: nor theyr contrarines hurteth nat vs so moche as the contrarines of our euyll lyfe, the whiche is contrary both to God and Christe. For he sayde: "Who that is nat with me, is agaynst me." 17

Colet is well aware of the widespread problem of heresy in 1511, and he sides with his fellow clergy against heretics. But he maintains that the heresies of the laity are not so great an evil as the notoriously wicked lives of most priests, which St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in a sermon preached before another synod or convocation, had called the greatest and most dangerous kind of heresy of all. For heresy in the form of the bad examples of those whose task is to lead the Church back to God is much worse heresy than false doctrine alone, since bad works are far worse than bad doctrine.

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17. *The Sermon of Doctor Colete, made to the Conuocacion at Paulis*. The original Latin is in Knight, *Life of Colet*, p. 244. The English translation printed by Berthelet, probably by Lupset, is given in Lupton, *Life of Colet*, p. 298.

> We are also nowe a dayes greued of heretykes, men mad with marueylous folysshenes. But the heresies of them are nat so pestilent and pernicious vnto vs and the people, as the euyll and wicked lyfe of pristes; the whiche, if we beleue saynt Barnard, is a certeyn kynde of heresye, and chiefe of all and most perillous. For that same holy father, in a certeyne conuocation, preachynge vnto the pristes of his tyme, in a certayne sermon so he sayde by these wordes: "There be many catholyke and faithfull men in speakynge and preachynge, the whiche same men are heretykes in workyng. For that that heretikes do by euyll teachynge, that same do they throughe euyll exaumple: they leade the people oute of the ryght way, and brynge them in to errour of lyfe. And so moche they are worse than heretyckes, howe moche theyr workes preuaile their wordes." This that holye father saynt Barnarde, with a great and a feruent spirite, sayde agaynste the sect of evyl pristes in his time. 18

Throughout the Convocation sermon it is clear that Colet looks upon the priesthood in accordance with the thought of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the Pseudo-Dionysius. Thus he sees the hierarchy of the clergy as higher than the entire lay order or hierarchy, even its highest members, the kings of Europe, including the King of England, and the Holy Roman Emperor. Thus, for Colet, the abused privilege of "benefit of clergy" against which the Parliament of 1512 was soon to pass a bill was entirely justified in principle. His statements in the Convocation Sermon regarding the relationship of the clergy to the laity is based upon the relationship between the two orders described in the ecclesiological opus of the author whose works Colet believed interpret the thought of Paul, since the pseudo-Areopagite was supposedly the direct disciple of that Apostle. But Colet's idealism was such that his extremely high view of the exalted calling of the sacerdotium made him

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18. Lupton, op. cit., pp. 298-99. Colet's original Latin is in Knight, pp. 244-45. The quotation makes clear that Colet did not favor the Lollard heresy but considered evil living worse than evil doctrine.

especially hard on those who did not live up to the greater degrees of grace which, according to Dionysius, God had granted the pontiffs or higher clergy. This explains why Colet could both appeal in humility to the bishops meeting in the Convocation to lead and set examples to lesser clergy like himself in bringing about the reformation of the Church, and at the same time, as Erasmus tells us, feel an abhorrence for men he felt to be bad bishops more than for anyone else in the Church:

> There was no class of persons to whom [Colet] was more opposed or for whom he had a greater abhorrence than those bishops who acted the part of wolves instead of shepherds [pastores], showing themselves off before the people with their appearance of sanctity, their ceremonies, benedictions, and miserable indulgences; while at heart they were slaves to the world, that is, to ostentation and gain. He had a leaning to some opinions derived from Dionysius and other early theologians. . . . 19

Since Erasmus tells Jonas earlier that Colet "showed a remarkable discretion in adapting himself to others, so as to avoid giving offence to anyone or bringing any slur on his good name," it seems certain that Colet's strong views concerning some of the English bishops was in the main stated in private to close friends like Erasmus.[20] In short, Colet had a very high view of the episcopate and priesthood as the highest orders in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of clergy and believed that they

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19. Erasmus to Jodocus Jonas, June 13, 1521; Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 521, lines 472-476. Lupton's translation with modifications is given by Olin, op. cit., pp. 184-85.

20. Cf. Olin, pp. 182. Erasmus adds that "among friends and scholars, however, [Colet] would express his views with the utmost freedom." Ibid., p. 183. This "remarkable discretion in adapting himself to others" was no doubt part of Colet's determination to imitate St. Paul, who said he became all things to all men for the sake of the Gospel, in order to give the minimum of offense.

were closer to God than the laity, but that because of their higher position they had a greater responsibility to transmit the grace which God has given them. The task of the priesthood as a whole is to give leadership to the laity or people by their good example. The clergy should be like the soul in the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, while the laity or temporality are the "more carnal" part and like the body. The ills of the Church therefore cannot be reformed in the hierarchical order which God has established unless the spirituality or *sacerdotium* first reform themselves under the leadership of "our fathers," the bishops.

The Structure of the Convocation Sermon

For his text in this sermon Colet characteristically chose a text from his favorite Pauline Epistle to the Romans. Romans 12:2 was, in fact, one of the favorite N.T. texts on reformation for the Church Fathers,[21] and perhaps the most explicit of all St. Paul's statements in this regard.

> To exhorte you, reuerend fathers, to the endeuour of reformation of the churches estate, (bicause that nothynge hath so disfigured the face of the churche as hath the facion of seculer and worldly lyuynge in clerkes and prestes) I knowe nat where to take begynnyng of my tale than of the apostle Paule, in whose temple ye are gethered to gether. For he, writynge vnto the Romanes, and vnder their name vnto you, saith: "Be you nat conformed to this worlde, but be you reformed in the newnes of your vnderstandynge, that ye may proue what is the good wyll of God,

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[21] Cf. G. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform . . . in the Age of the Fathers*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 49-62.

> well pleasing and perfecte." This dyd the apostell wryte to all christen men, but most chiefly vnto prestes and bysshops. Prestes and bysshops are the light of the worlde. For vnto them sayde our Sauiour: "you are the lyghte of the world." And he sayde also: "If the lyghte that is in the [thee] be darkenes, howe darke shall the darkenes be?" 22

Colet here places the priests and bishops together as representing the major orders of the clergy. By "clerkes" he refers to the minor orders of clergy below the rank of deacon, which Dionysius describes in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Since Colet believed that all priests and not just the bishops stand in direct succession from the original apostles, the sayings of Christ which were originally intended for the Apostles are now especially intended for the entire priesthood or clergy in major orders.

Colet next proceeds to divide his Pauline text into two sections which will make up the two parts of his sermon: the evil "conformation to this world" and the necessity of "reformation in the newness of your understanding." 23 Both texts and sections of the sermon are applied first and foremost to the clergy or spirituality, and then "in due order" to the lesser order of the laity. With his extremely strong view of the proper order of things in the Church, Colet was convinced that if the higher and spiritual part of the Church reformed themselves to the ideal of their lives which is maintained by Dionysius and the other Church Fathers and is stated in the Canon Law, the laity would immediately

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22. Ibid., p. 294. The original Latin is in Knight, p. 240.

23. Cf. Lupton, pp. 295 f., 299 f.; Knight, pp. 240 f., 245 f.

reform their lives in imitation of their "rulers," the clergy.[24] Colet was probably optimistic in this regard because of the great success of his own preaching and example.[24a]

The Convocation Sermon also supports the view expressed by Colet in his commentary on the seventh chapter of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy that just as the bishops or high priests (pontifici) are the highest order of the clergy, so that God's grace is infused into them in the highest degree if they fulfil their functions as they ought, so the pope is the highest bishop or pontiff (summus pontifex) to whom the whole Church looks for the highest leadership.[25] Thus, at the beginning of his sermon he asks for prayers for the leaders of the Church in order, beginning with "our most holy father the pope," then for the entire spirituality, and finally for the Christian people or laity.

> And before all thynge let vs praye vnto God the Father all myghty; fyrste remembrynge our most holy father the pope; and all spirituall pastours, with all christian people; farthermore the moost reuerend father and lorde the archebishoppe, president of this councell, and al bishops, and al the clergie, and all the people of Englande; remembrynge fynally this your congregation, desirynge God to inspire your myndes so accordyngly to agre, to suche profyte and frute of the churche that ye seme nat, after the councell fynysshed, to haue ben

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[24] ". . . in the epistell to the Hebrewes these are the wordes of saynt Paule to the laye people; 'Obey,' saith he, 'to your rulers [praepositis vestris], and be you vnder them.'" Lupton, ibid., pp. 302-303; Knight, p. 249.

[24a] For this, see Thomas More's letter to Colet dated by Miss Rogers October 23, 1504. St. Thomas More: Selected Letters, ed. E. F. Rogers, pp. 4-6.

[25] Cf. In Eccl. Hier., c. 7.3., p. 264, for the Latin.

> gathered to gether in vayne and without cause.
> Let vs all saye Pater noster. 26

This is the only explicit statement by Colet in his extant works which comments on the pope and the Council. Nevertheless we can state his views of the magisterium when this statement is compared with his discussion of the pope in his commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius. The pope is the highest bishop and executive officer of the Church. Although he does not grant the pope or any other bishop a higher sacramental function than any priest, Colet makes clear that the pope and the bishops were granted a higher legal authority by the apostolic Church in order to preserve the Church's harmony and unity.[26a] Thus in accordance with his theology Colet would maintain that the universal Church has delegated to the summus pontifex or pope the authority to call the General Council in the same way that the Archbishop of Canterbury as papal legatus natus and Primate of all England has the power to convoke the provincial council or Convocation of his ecclesiastical province. After Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal Archbishop of York, was created legatus de latere or special legate from the pope to England on May 17, 1518, Colet almost immediately submitted to him in this capacity his revised Cathedral Statutes as the representative of the pope in England, in an attempt to reform the Cathedral chapter by legislation.[27] Since

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26. Lupton, op. cit., p. 294. Original Latin in Knight, p. 240.

26a. Cf. In Eccl. Hier, c. 3. 2, p. 220, for original Latin.

27. Colet's revised exhibita of St. Paul's Cathedral Statutes for reforming the canons residentiary of the Cathedral Chapter were on September 1, 1518 specifically addressed to Wolsey as Cardinal Archbishop of York and legatus de latere from the Apostolic or Papal

Wolsey's power to bring about such a reform of St. Paul's Cathedral, which he did actually attempt by drawing up new statutes based on those submitted by Colet, depended in the Canterbury province upon his authority as Cardinal legate de latere, it is clear that Colet fully accepted the canonical powers of the pope which were represented in his extraordinary legate, Wolsey.[28] This agrees precisely with Erasmus' statement to Justus Jonas. Colet's unusual theological views, "drawn from Dionysius and the other early theologians," were never carried to the point of transgressing the Canon Law.[29] We find nowhere in Colet's writings anything like the statement which Sir Thomas More made in his letter to Thomas Cromwell of March 5, 1534: "yit neuer thowght I the Pope above the generall counsaile."[30] Colet states in his Convocation sermon that the grave ills of the Church can best be remedied through the frequent convocation of ecclesiastical councils at all levels, but not in such a way as to derogate from the executive authority delegated by the

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See. The title reads, "Exhibita a Johanne Collet Decano, reverendissimo Patri et Domino Cardinali Eboracensi ac Apostolico Legato a latere, pro Reformatione Status Residenciariorum in Ecclesia Sancti Pauli, primo Septembris, Anno Domini 1518." W. Sparrow Simpson, ed. Registrum Statutorum et Consuetudinum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Sancti Pauli Londinensis (London, 1873), p. 237.

[28] Cf. A. F. Pollard, Wolsey (London, 1929), p. 165 f., for Wolsey's special legatine powers which were originally granted by Leo X in 1518 on the grounds that he would use them for Church reformation. Wolsey's main reason for demanding these broad powers was political, since Leo needed Henry VIII's support against the French in Italy. Nevertheless Wolsey did (note 28 continued on following page).

[29] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 521, lines 476-77.

[30] The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More, ed. E. F. Rogers (Princeton, 1947), ep. 199, p. 499, lines 261-262. This statement was made after Henry VIII had actually appealed to a General Council, (note 30 continued on following page).

Catholic Church to the pope and bishops as the properly constituted authorities in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the *ecclesia militans*. Colet had an extremely strong sense, perhaps derived from Dionysius, of the correct order of things, and his ideas of reformation were all based upon the idea of a return to the original ideals of the Western Church as stated in law. We can therefore say that he certainly did not accept the strict or original conciliar theory (which still had considerable support in France) that the General Council is above the pope. Rather, like most of the better English churchmen of the late Middle Ages, he desired frequent reforming councils at every level to be convoked by the appropriate canonical authorities, in keeping with the decree *Frequens* of the Council of Constance rather than the decree *Sacrosancta*. As we have seen, this was also the hope of most Catholic reformers by 1511. It would become clear when on July 25, 1511, Julius II

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(28) make some attempts at ecclesiastical reformation as *legatus a latere* between his original appointment as legate in May 1518 and his fall from power in November 1529; although in a very high-handed way. During this period Wolsey was in fact practically vice-pope for England. He himself said after his fall that he considered his authority or "majesty" to reside in his legatine powers.

(30) but nevertheless the whole letter shows More's difficulty in attempting to prove that he had been a faithful councillor to Henry, and yet at the same time maintaining his views regarding the nature of the Catholic Church and the pope's place in it after Parliament had made statutory the Act in Restraint of Appeals and the Succession Act of 1534. Colet would probably have found himself in the same quandary had he lived this long. More seems to have been influenced to some degree by the Gallican conciliar theory, since he claimed that he had France on his side in his view of the General Council. Cf. A. G. Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation*, p. 64. This appeal to France seemed "rank malice" to the Duke of Norfolk and many other Englishmen, since France was still the national enemy. *Ibid.*, p. 64; J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, *passim*.

convoked a General Council to meet at Rome on April 19, 1512.[31] If Colet's sermon was delivered on February 6, 1511/12, as seems most likely, the papal Council had at this time already been called in opposition to the French and imperially supported non-papal "General Council" of Pisa. It is notable that England held aloof from the appeals by Louis XII, backed by both conciliarists at the University of Paris and the Emperor Maximilian I, to support the Council convoked by a minority of the Cardinals to meet at Pisa. In this regard the *ecclesia Anglicana* was following a policy which had been consistent in its rather luke-warm papalism since the Council of Pavia-Siena of 1423-24.

On the other hand, Colet's commentary on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, which may well have been written after he became Dean of St. Paul's on about May 5, 1505, and, in any case, was never changed by him before his death, does make abundantly clear his fury at the royal interference in the affairs of the English Church through the King's power to nominate the bishops.[32] The subapostolic authority which

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[31] Cf. P. Hughes, *A History of the Church*, III, p. 421.

[32] "This is the meaning of what Dionysius says, that the sacrament of nomination betokens the choice and approval of God in heaven. . . . One may here express an abhorrence of the detestable custom which has by now been growing for a long time in the Church and is deep-rooted at the present time almost to the destruction of the *respublica Christiana*, whereby temporal princes, insane and under the name of Christians, but open enemies and foes of God and blasphemers of Christ and overthrowers of his Church . . . with proud and rash minds . . . in chambers and at banquets appoint bishops to rule the Church of Christ. These men so appointed are (heinous crime!) men who are ignorant of all sacred things and skilled in all that is profane, men to whom the princes have already sold these very bishoprics. . . .

Colet attributed to Dionysius as the disciple of St. Paul gave the Dean both a very definite view of the difference between the clergy and the laity, and also a very strict view of canon law and hierarchical order in the Church.

This view of ecclesiastical order or hierarchy is evident throughout the Convocation Sermon. At the beginning of it the order in which Colet asks for prayers for the Church is significant. First, "our most holy father the pope and all spiritual pastours," and then "all christian people," that is the entire respublica Christiana over which the Pope and the ecclesiastical hierarchy are the rulers. Only then does he ask prayers for William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, as president of the Convocation now convened (and papal legatus natus) and the bishops, clergy, and laity of England as members of a specific part of the Catholic Church or societas Christiana.[33] Nowhere in his extant writings does Colet place the national Church above the universal Church, but on the contrary his ecclesiological tract De corpore Christi mystico and Pauline commentaries make clear that for Colet the universal Church as whole organic body must always be placed before any one of its parts, including the ecclesia Anglicana. We can now see that Colet's

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Insanity of princes! Blindness and stupidity of ecclesiastics! . . . All order is being overthrown . . . Unless Christ have pity on his Church, death, which is almost here, will take over all things. For how can that [Church] endure which is governed with diseased counsel and murderous hands?" In Eccl. Hier., c.5.3, pp. 246-47; tr. 123-24.

[33] Lupton, Life, p. 294; Knight, Life, p. 240. Cf., for instance, Enarr. Rom., c.13, p. 204, tr. 100: "Velit Paulus christiana societas quae vocatur ecclesia amore in se tota . . . "

view of the Church and the clergy was precisely that which would be legislated against by the Reformation Parliament of Henry VIII. Pollard may well be right in holding that the implications in Wolsey's position as papal legate _a latere_ as well as Lord Chancellor of England were so anomalous that they were almost certain eventually to provoke a constitutional breach between the English Crown and the papacy.[34] This ambiguity was not yet evident, however, at the time of Colet's death on September 16, 1519; so that, unlike Sir Thomas More, Colet was never forced to make the extremely difficult decision which became necessary after March 1533 to swear an oath to accept the King as the Supreme Head of the Church militant in England. On the basis of the opinions expressed in his commentary on the _Ecclesiastical Hierarchy_, Colet would have been totally unable to do this.[35]

This distinction in Colet's thought between the clergy and the laity, or the spirituality and the temporality, is stated explicitly in the Convocation Sermon, where it is made clear that for him the Apostles were both priests and bishops:

> The fourthe secular euyll that spotteth and makyth yll fauored the face of the churche, is the continuall secular occupation, wherin prestes and byshops nowe a dayes doth busy them selfe . . . warriours rather of this worlde than of Christe . . . The warrynge of them is nat carnall but spirituall. For our warrynge is to pray, to rede and study scriptures, to preache the worde of God, to ministre the sacramentes of helth, to do sacrifice for the people, and to offer hostis for their sinnes. For we are mediatours

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[34] Pollard, _Wolsey_, p. 169.

[35] Cf. note 32 _supra_.

> and meanes vnto God for men . . . Wherfore those apostels, that were the first pristes and byshops, dydde so moche abhorre from all maner of medlyng of secular thinges, that they wolde nat minystre the meate that was necessarye to poore people, al though that were a great worke of vertue . . . 36

For Colet, since the Apostles were priests as well as bishops, all priests stand in succession from them like the bishops, as distinct from all members of the laity including princes. Colet preaches that it is precisely this intermingling with the worldly life of the laity which has caused priests to leave their high calling and become treated with contempt by the laity, who expect other-worldliness and apostolic examples from their spiritual pastors.

> Without dout, of this secularitie, and that clerkes and prestes, leauyng all spiritualnes, do turmoyle them selfe with erthly occupations, many euils do folowe.
>
> Fyrst, the dignitie of pristhode is dyshonoured; the whiche is greatter than other [either] the kynges or emperours: it is egall [equal] with the dignite of angels. But the brightness of this great dignitie is sore shadowed, when prestes are occupied in erthly thinges, whose conuersation ought to be in heuen.
>
> Secondarily, pristhode is dispised, whan there is no difference betwixt suche pristis and lay people, but, accordynge to the prophecy of Ozee [Hosea]: "as the people be, so are the pristes."
>
> Thyrdly, the beautiful ordre and holy dignite in the churche is confused, whan the highest in the churche do meddle with vile and erthly thynges, and in theyr stede vile and abiecte persons do exercise hygh and heuenly things.

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36. Lupton, Life, pp. 296-97. Original Latin in Knight, Life, pp. 242-43.

> Fourthly, the lay people haue great occasion of euils, and cause to fall, whan those men whose dutie is to drawe men from the affection of this worlde, by their continual conuersation in this worlde teche men to loue this worlde, and of the loue of the worlde cast them downe heedlyng [headlong] in to hell. [37]

This passage shows that Colet is essentially medieval or conservative in his view of the reformation of the Church. Almost all the ideas in the Convocation Sermon are drawn from Scripture and from the Pseudo-Dionysius, but it is the Vulgate Scripture that he uses; although it is now clear that he had access to almost all, if not all, of the "*Nouum Testamentum Latinius*" or Latin translation in the *Novum Instrumentum* of Erasmus.[38]

Colet's call to reformation in his sermon thus falls into the tradition of what Jedin calls episcopalism, which we have already discussed. In preaching to the leading Convocation or synod of the English Church, he is basically calling for a reform of the clergy under the leaders of the episcopate, the highest members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the clergy for the Southern Province of Canterbury. He is convinced that the Dionysian interpretation of St. Paul and the New Testament is the correct one, so that he treats the clergy as a wholly different status in the Church from the lay people. Priests by vocation are mediators and go-betweens (*sequestri*) between God and men, since their task is to imitate Christ in this as in every other regard. Colet is therefore convinced that if the spirituality will only return to their true profession under their proper hierarchical leadership, the evils that he considers have brought the Church close to destruction in his own day will be set right, and the Church militant will continue on her appointed way under the guidance of Providence toward the *eschaton* when she will become part of the Church triumphant, the celestial City of God. But these ecclesiastical ills have been growing for a long time and are deeply rooted in the Church. He therefore felt it necessary to take the opportunity to address the gathering of the most important part of the episcopal leadership of the *ecclesia Anglicana* and describe to them very bluntly the evils in the Church and the sources of those evils under the general heading pointed to in the first part of Rom. 12:2, *conformatio huic seculo*. Only when this has been done in the first part of the sermon does Colet pass to his constructive suggestions *de reformatione* in the second and final part. Because of his doctrine of the Church, he is convinced that if the leaders of the English clergy in the Convocation will undertake to reform themselves, the reformation of the laity will be an easy matter.[39] In this Colet was perhaps being over-idealistic (no doubt the result of the strongly Platonist influence on his thought), but all the same it was true that it was the evil behavior of a clergy who had fallen so far below their original ideals which was causing the antagonism which would very shortly come to a head in the Hunne case and Parliament, and would permit eventually Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII with little difficulty to engineer a total breach from the Roman Church in 1533 and 1534.

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[37] Lupton, p. 297. Colet's Latin in Knight, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-44. This passage shows clearly that Colet's view of the Church is still dominated by the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Dionysius and that his great stress on order in the Church comes especially from this same source, since he speaks of the "pulcher ordo hierarchicus in ecclesia." Many of the ideas in this passage are closely paralleled in Colet's commentary on the *Eccl. Hier.*

[38] Cf. Allen, II, pp. 181-84. Erasmus may have originally begun this at Colet's suggestion, and Colet certainly lent him ancient Latin MSS. at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1505-06 when Erasmus was already working on his new translation as well as reconstructing the Greek text. Erasmus' original Latin translation was not published by him until the second edition of 1518, entitled *Novum Testamentum*. The phrase "Novum Testamentum Latinius" regarding Erasmus' translation was used by Colet in his letter to Erasmus of June 20, 1516, in which he encourages Erasmus to illustrate his better Latin translation of the N.T. with expositions and to write very long commentaries on the Gospels. Allen, II, ep. 423, p. 258, lines 41-43. Colet would of course use the traditional Scriptures in preaching in Convocation rather than an as yet private work of which he had had manuscripts copied by his amanuensis Peter Meghen.

"Be ye not conformed unto this world"

Colet begins his discussion of conformatio huic seculo by stating that his Pauline text was written "to all christen men, but most chiefly vnto prestes and bysshops."[40] Because the ontological status of the clergy is higher than that of the laity, their responsibility is greater and the Biblical message is chiefly directed to them. This was also the view upon which Colet carried out all his Biblical hermeneutics including his Oxford Lectures, his listeners being almost all clergy; and it is one of the major differences between his thought and that of Erasmus.[41]

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[39] Knight, Life, p. 248; Lupton, Life, p. 302.

[40] Lupton, Life, p. 294.

[41] Erasmus would be a major cause of laicizing the Christian Gospel, beginning with the Enchiridion. Colet played an admirable part in instructing the laity as is made clear by both More and Erasmus and also the inscription on Colet's tomb. But the Convocation Sermon makes clear the continuing strong influence upon him of Dionysius, who was the major source of the strict line which he drew between the clergy and the laity. There is no evidence in any of Colet's extant writings that Grocyn's criticism of Dionysius had any important influence upon him; so that the account of his coming to disbelieve in Dionysius seems to depend entirely on the testimony of John Jewel in his dispute with Harding over the authority of the writings of Dionysius. Cf. Jewel, Of Private Masse (1611), p. 8, cited by J. H. Lupton, in A Treatise on the Sacraments of the Church, p. 5, note 1.

Colet makes clear at once that he treats the "world" and "carnality" as exactly equivalent and opposed to the spiritual reformation necessary for the Church.

> Prestes and byssops are the light of the worlde. For vnto them sayde our Sauiour: "you are the lyghte of the worlde." And he sayde also: "If the lyghte that is in the be darkenes, howe darke shall the darkenes be?" That is to say, if prestes and bysshops, that shulde be as lyghtes, ronne in the darke way of the worlde, howe darke than shall the secular people be? Wherfore Saynt Paule sayde chiefly vnto prestes and byshops: "be you nat conformable to this worlde, but be ye reformed."
>
> In the whiche wordes the apostle dothe two thinges. Fyrst, he doth forbyd that we be nat conformable to the worlde and be made carnall. Farthermore he dothe commaunde that we be reformed in the spyryte of God, wherby we are spirituall. I entendynge to folowe this ordre, I wyll speke first of conformation, then after of reformation. 42

This traditional distinction between spirituality and carnality, the other world and this world, the clergy and the laity, is evident also throughout Colet's other theological writings. It was clearly enforced by his study of Plato and Plotinus and especially by the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius and other Platonist Church Fathers. There is, however, a difficulty regarding Colet's view of the relationship between the clergy and the laity which requires explanation. In his shorter commentary on Romans Colet also discusses the relationship between the two orders, comparing the dispute between the clergy and the laity in his own day to the disputes between the Jews and the Gentiles of which Paul speaks in Romans. In the course of his discussion, which, we

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42. Lupton, Life, pp. 294-95. Colet's Latin is in Knight, Life, p. 240. The Latin says that the first of the two Pauline words is interpreted as prohibiting priests from conforming to this age and

believe, derives almost certainly from his experiences in London and even possibly from the Hunne case, Colet goes so far as to say that if St. Paul were adjudicating the same argument between carnal and spiritual men today, he would say that if a layman has done the work of a priest, he is accounted a priest; and that a priest following in the footsteps of the laity is no more than a layman. It has been argued that Colet here anticipates Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers,[43] so that the passage in question needs to be compared very closely with what Colet says regarding the relationship between the two orders of Christian society in the Convocation Sermon. In his application of Paul's argument in Rom. 2:2 f. to the contemporary situation, Colet writes

> Such a dissension as formerly prevailed between the Jews and the Gentiles, now prevails almost everywhere in the Christian Church between the clergy and the laity, between what are commonly called the spiritual and temporal parties in the Church. Each accuses the other, and most deplorable is the strife. Pride, boastfulness, and vanity are common to both. . . . In such a quarrel St. Paul, or any one else using his words, might interpose and might well condemn both parties and pronounce them both 'inexcusable'. He might show them that each . . . while accusing the other was condemning himself . . . and

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working carnal things (et efficiamur carnales), whereas the English translation says "fyrst, he doth forbyd that we . . . be made carnall." Slight changes in meaning of this kind in the English version of the sermon increase the probability that the translation was not done by Colet himself; since he is always extremely careful to state his precise meaning throughout his Latin theological works, even though the Latin itself is sometimes difficult to interpret.

[43] Leland Miles, John Colet and the Platonic Tradition, p. 209.

> 'treasuring up for himself' God's 'wrath in the day of wrath'. He might show them that a layman if he has done the work of a priest is accounted a priest; and that a priest if he follow in a layman's footsteps is no more than a layman. . . . 'He is not a' priest, 'who is one outwardly' with the tonsure in the flesh; but 'he who is one inwardly in the spirit. . . .'
>
> If you are a spiritual-minded priest, you will bear with the layman; you will bless him; you will study how to bless him spiritually by speech, counsel, and example. When he is malicious, you will be kindly; when he curses you, you will be full of blessing; when he is niggardly, you will be bountiful, and merciful when he is severe. O priests of Jesus Christ, follow the counsel of the Apostle Peter [Peter 3:16, 17, 8] . . . If Peter wrote in this way to all Christians, much more did he write to the clergy! By returning to our primitive goodness, we will recall the laity to their pristine obedience. 44

This passage is difficult to interpret precisely because the argument is put into the mouth of Paul by means of a transposition of his words to the Jews in Romans. We naturally suspect that the "alius quisquam verbis Pauli usus" is Colet himself, since a central motif of his teaching is that all Christians and especially priests should imitate the Apostles who themselves imitated Christ. Unfortunately we do not have the all important information as to when these words were written, nor to whom they were addressed, except that Colet states near the beginning that the commentary was originally written for "a young friend called Edmund" who was studying literature and theology at the same time. Two headings of the commentary, evidently contemporary with Colet, state that it is the work of Colet as professor theologiae and decanus Sancti Pauli, that is to say, it was written after 1504 when Colet became Dean of St. Paul's. The passage certainly states that the words of Paul

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44. Scripta in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, c. 2, pp. 227-28; tr. 88-90.

can be interpreted to mean that the layman who does the opus sacerdotis is to be held a priest, and the priest who follows the path of the laity, is held to be a layman. Colet explains that external symbols are meaningless to God who does not accept personae, that is, the roles which people play in the world, but rather their actual lives. Colet's Dionysian mysticism here is certainly moving in the direction of obliterating the formal distinction between the clergy and the laity. A little before this he similarly understands the Pauline distinction between spirit and flesh to mean that the external sacrament of baptism is useless if the man who has received it does not then proceed to live the Christian life in imitation of Christ.[45] It appears to us that the best way to interpret this passage in keeping with the rest of Colet's theology is to understand that Colet is showing that the Pauline words regarding the relation between Christianity and Judaism could be applied in this way and indeed should be if priests refuse to live up to the standards of that higher form of Christian life to which Colet, following Dionysius, believes that they have been called. The end of this same passage from his shorter Scripta ad Romanos shows that Colet interprets I Peter 3:8, 16-17 as intended for the priesthood rather than for the laity, just as in the Convocation sermon he says that his text, Rom. 12:2, was written *maxime autem ad sacerdotes et episcopos*.[46] Clearly the hypocrisy and evil-living of the clergy of the time had, by the time he wrote his shorter commentary on *Romans*, come close to reaching the breaking-point for Colet, so that given his extremely high view of the priesthood, and his Platonic stress upon being rather than seeming and a good life rather than mere doctrine, he here implies that the proper application for his own day of the Pauline teaching in *Romans* 2, would mean that the external sacraments of baptism and holy orders are meaningless unless they lead in practice as well as theory to a truly Christian life which imitates to the highest degree possible the lives of Christ and his Apostles. For Colet, God's command to men is to lead the spiritual life which is not of this world. Thus if a layman whose calling is to the things of this world is nevertheless able to live an unworldly and spiritual life that the priests are called to, he should be accounted a priest, even if he has never received the sacrament of ordination. This may perhaps explain the *rationale* behind Colet's advice that Thomas More should not enter a monastery. The all-important thing is Christian living, which for Colet meant the imitation of Christ and the apostolic life. This stress, which derives especially from Dionysius' doctrine of the sacraments, appears to have been one of the ways in which Colet influenced Erasmus. For views similar to this are basic to Erasmus' teaching regarding that philosophia Christi or philosophia Christiana, which Colet in his Scripta ad Romanos also stresses.[47]

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[45] Ibid., p. 227: "Baptismus et alia sacramenta 'quidem prosunt, si' evangelium 'observes. Si autem privaricator' evangelii 'sis', baptismus tuus paganismus est." Colet here directly applies Paul's words regarding Jewish circumcision under the Old Law to Christian baptism and other sacraments under the lex nova. If a man does not observe or live in accordance with the Gospel, baptism and the other sacraments or symbols are useless.

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[46] Compare Knight, *Life*, p. 240 with *Scripta Rom.*, p. 228. In both cases Colet says that apostolic words are addressed to all Christians, but much more to priesthood than to the laity. "Si Petrus scripsit ad omnes Christianos, multo magis ad sacerdotes." *Scripta Rom.*, c.2, p. 228. Compare, "Quare maxime sacerdotibus et episcopis dicit Paulus, 'Nolite conformari huic seculo, sed reformamini." Knight, *Life*, p. 240.

Therefore, in order to reach a final conclusion regarding the meaning of this important passage from the shorter commentary on Romans, it would be necessary to know when and under what circumstances it was written, and also whether John Jewel was right in saying that Colet finally abandoned his belief in the subapostolic authority of Dionysius. In his last years, as we know from Erasmus, Colet was striving toward a fully biblical theology. It is also clear that the main prop for his very high view of the priesthood was the supposedly almost apostolic authority which he granted to the corpus Dionysiacum as the works of the disciple of his favorite apostle, Paul. We believe that Colet's description of the antagonism between the clergy and the laity probably derive from an atmosphere in London poisoned by the conflict over the Hunne case, which gained notice with Hunne's attempt to gain a Praemunire decision against a clergyman at the secular court of the King's Bench in the spring of 1513.[48] Despite Colet's very high view of the priesthood and its superiority to the lay order, by 1512 he had given the governance of his school to married laymen, telling Erasmus that least evil was to be found in these.

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[47] Cf. McConica, English Humanists, p. 15. Cf. Scripta ad. Rom., c. 4, p. 248; tr. p. 118. Both Colet and Erasmus derived their view of the philosophia Christiana from the Church Fathers. If Colet's shorter commentary on Romans is to be dated as early as 1498, as Jayne claims, we might conclude that Erasmus derived this idea from Colet. We see no reason, however, todoubt the contemporary heading which dates this commentary after Colet became Dean in 1505. The view of Christian theology as the philosophy of Christ or Christian philosophy goes back at least to St. Justin Martyr.

[48] Thomas More says regarding Hunne and his case that he was "a man highe mynded, & sette on the glorie of a victorye, whiche he

Because of the uncertainty with regard to the dating of the Scripta ad Romanos, therefore, it is difficult to give precisely the right weight to Colet's statement in it that Paul might show both clergy and laity that "a layman if he has done the work of a priest is to be accounted a priest." It is clear that Colet's mystical or spiritualizing view of the sacrament of orders has now reached an almost Donatist position in which he refuses to admit the efficacy of baptism, ordination, or any other of the seven sacraments on a person whose life shows only too clearly that the sacrament has not had an effective practical effect. Nevertheless, the end of the passage which completes the second chapter of Colet's shorter commentary on Romans also shows that Colet still maintains here the distinction

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hoped to have in ye premunyre, wherof he muche boasted as they sayd, among his familiar frendes, that he trusted to bee spoken of long after hys dayes. . . ." More, Dialogue concernynge heresyes . . . , III, cap. 15 in Works (1557), p. 239, cited by S. F. C. Milsom, "Richard Hunne's 'Praemunire'," English Historical Review, LXXVI (1961), p. 81. Although Hunne was evidently murdered in the so-called Lollards' Tower at St. Paul's Cathedral on December 4, 1514, and ramifications of the case were of vital importance in the Parliament of 1515, there appears to be no direct evidence of Colet's position regarding a case in which he must surely have been to some degree involved. However, his statements in the shorter commentary on Romans regarding the deplorable strife between the clergy and laity, the "pride, boastfulness, and vanity" of the laity as well as the clergy, and the fact that "the laity insolently extol themselves, and look down upon the clergy" although no doubt reflecting the general situation in England in the early sixteenth century, seem to me to point to the poisonous atmosphere of the Hunne case. Cf. Opusc., pp. 88-89.

between clergy and laity. After quoting I Peter 3:16-17, 8, Colet says "if St. Peter wrote thus to all Christians, how much more [did he refer] to the clergy?" He adds that "by returning to our ancient goodness, we [priests] will recall the laymen to their ancient obedience." 49 This is not Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, nor would we expect it to be, since Luther had not developed his doctrine by the time Colet wrote this commentary, but it is moving in the same direction because of the influence of Romans on Colet's thought. What Colet wished to show the clergy was that if they did not return to their primitive ideals as described in the Bible and the Fathers, they would lose the respect of the laity and would not be considered priests in the sight of God. It is also certain, moreover, that Colet's attempt to return to a dominantly Pauline Biblical theology had considerable influence on Erasmus, whose Novum Instrumentum and Annotationes in turn clearly influenced Luther's lectures on Romans and Galatians and in this way came to have an important effect upon the development of Luther's Reformation theology.

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49. "Si Petrus scripsit ad omnes Christianos, multo magis ad sacerdotes. Redeuntes ad pristinam bonitatem, laycos in pristinam obedientiam revocabimus." Scripta Rom., p. 228. Colet goes on to address the layman, and in doing so shows once again that he hopes against hope for a return of the priesthood to their primitive ideals. "If . . . you are a good layman, you will have pity on a lost and abandoned priest. You will grieve that the light you were to see by is extinguished, that the example you were to follow is taken away. . . . You will weep to see the leaders in the [spiritual] war [i.e., the priests] slain, and Christians surrendering to the Devil and being brought again into captivity. You will weep to see the helmsmen lost [amissis], and the ship of the Church in danger among the waves of the world." Opuscula, p. 90.

But if we place Colet's statements in the shorter commentary on Romans in the context of his total thought, it is even less likely that he, had he lived, would have followed Luther after the publication of his extreme writings of 1520 than that Erasmus should have done so; and in fact Erasmus had begun to turn against Luther as a reformer by early 1521. By the early sixteenth century, all serious Christians agreed that there was a desperate need for reformation in the Church, but even less than Erasmus would Colet have followed Luther to the point of breaking up the unity of the Corpus mysticum or societas Christiana which was clearly to be the price for following him after the publication of the final papal bull against his writings in January 1521.[50]

PART II

"But be you reformed in the newnes of your vnderstandynge"

Colet's view of the Church in his theological writings is, however, on the whole so mystical and idealistic that we must necessarily depend primarily on his Convocation Sermon to understand his program for the reform of the Church. Despite the statements in chapter 2 of his shorter commentary on Romans, Colet always upholds the medieval distinction between the clergy and the laity and maintains that it was Christ's command, delivered to the Apostles, that the priesthood should be the commanders or officers in the Church militant on earth however badly they are leading their troops, the laity. It is not only because he is addressing the Canterbury Convocation that Colet (in his only complete sermon which survives) addresses his program of Church reform to the clergy.

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[50] The final papal bull which officially pronounced Luther a heretic was issued by the papacy on January 2, 1521. For Colet's extremely strong view regarding the organic unity of the Church, see his brief ecclesiological tract De compositione sancti corpus Christi mystici, quae est ecclesia . . . , in Opuscula quaedam theologica, ed. J. H. Lupton, pp. 185-95.

As is the case with all his Biblical hermeneutics, the first part of the sermon is an application to the clergy of Scripture, in this case, Paul's command in Rom. 12:2 that they should not be conformed to this world. Colet begins by stating his understanding of the meaning of Paul's phrase "hoc seculum," in the English translation, "the world." By "this world" Paul refers to four types of secular or worldly living:

> The apostle calleth the worlde the wayes and maner of secular lyuing, the whiche chiefly doth reste in foure euilles of this worlde: that is to say, in diuilisshe pride, in carnall concupiscence, in worldly couetousnes, in secular busines.[51]

These four worldly evils of which Paul speaks are, according to Colet, pride, lust, covetousness, and confusion of the priesthood with the laity. Because of the unity of the apostolic teaching they are the same evils of this world against which St. John also testifies in his first epistle,[51a] using the terms concupiscentia carnis (lust), concupiscentia oculorum (covetousness), and superbia vitae (pride).[52] These evils now reign in both the Church and churchmen to such a degree that we may even go so far as to say that everything in the contemporary Church can be reduced to one of these three things.

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[51] Knight, op. cit., pp. 240-41.

[51a] I John 2:16.

[52] Knight, op. cit., p. 241.

Colet begins with superbia vitae. Churchmen today are consumed with greediness and their desire for honour and dignity. This is the reason that they are constantly exchanging one benefice for another so that they are almost "out of breath" in their hurry to increase their wealth, and thus it is always a higher and richer benefice which they exchange for a lower and poorer one, as is obvious to everyone. Furthermore, once they have gained important dignities in the Church most of them go about with such proud looks on their faces "that they seme nat to be put in the humble bysshoprike of Christe, but rather in the high lordship and power of the world." [53] Thus they do not remember the quality which Christ, the magister humilitatis, required of the disciples whom he called to be the first prelates (praesulatum).

> The princis of people [sayth Christ] haue lordshyp of them and those that be in auctorite haue power; but do ye nat so: but he that is greatter amonge you, let him be minister; he that is highest in dignitie, be he the seruant of all men. The sonne of man came nat to be minystred vnto but to ministre. 54

In these words our Saviour teaches plainly that the magisterium in the Church is nothing other than a ministry, and that primacy among churchmen is nothing other than humble service. Colet is here repeating part of the Wycliffite complaint, by now a hundred and forty years old, that the bishops and all Christian priests should show Christian humility or "mekenes" instead of behaving with the haughtiness (*superbia*) of the temporal lords of this world. He had been confronting the problem which had beset the medieval Church since the early Middle Ages, when the Church had become feudalised in order to survive in the chaos of the times. Colet judges the prelates by the New Testament words of Christ and the Apostles (especially Paul) in the interpretation of St. Augustine. Christian *humilitas* must take the place of *superbia* and *concupiscentia* of the eyes and flesh.

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[53] Lupton, op. cit., p. 295. Praesulatus is better translated by "prelacy" than "bysshoprike" as the English translator has done. "Prelates" would include the lord abbots in Convocation as well as the bishops. This shows once again the necessity of going back to Colet's Latin text in an examination of the thought of the Convocation Sermon.

[54] Knight, p. 241.

The second secular evil of the contemporary Church is carnal concupiscence or lust, and this is intimately connected with the other evils of clerical worldliness. The flood of lust has grown to such a point in the Church that most priests now "in this moost besy tyme" seek nothing so diligently as those things which delight and please their senses. They spend their time in feasting and banquets, vain gossip (*vanas confabulationes*), sports and jokes (*ludis et jocis*), hunting and hawking. They set great store by procurers of pleasures. In short, they drown themselves in the pleasures of this world. It is of people like this that the Apostle Jude spoke in his canonical epistle when he said that such men "are foule and bestly, festing in their meates, with out feare fedyng them selfe . . . unto whom the storm of darknes is reserued for euerlastynge."[55]

The third secular evil characteristic of the contemporary clergy is covetousness or avarice (*avaritia*). St. John's term for avarice is

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[55] Knight, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-42.

concupiscentia oculorum; St. Paul calls it idolatry. This abominable plague has so entered the souls("minde") of almost the entire priesthood and so blinded their spiritual sight (*mentis oculos*) that we priests are blind to absolutely everything which does not seem likely to make us money. What else do priests look for nowadays except "fatte benefices" and high promotions? And having gained these promotions to rich benefices, we care only about the tithes and rents to be gained from them. This is the real source of the rampant pluralism today. We do not care how many or how great benefices we take (with their large responsibility for the care of souls) so long as they have a high monetary value. At this point in the sermon Colet almost certainly shows the influence of the *Pardoner's Tale* of Chaucer, which he had probably read in his youth together with those other English poets who, Erasmus says in his *Life of Colet*, "have done among their own countrymen what Dante and Petrarch have done in Italy."[56] He breaks into an attack upon the covetousness of the clergy; but unlike the Pardoner's sermon we can be sure that this was not hypocritical in Colet's case, but was a genuine plea for reform.

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[56] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 277-280; tr. Olin, p. 177: "The English nation has poets who have done among their own countrymen what Dante and Petrarch have done in Italy. And by the study of their writings [Colet] perfected his style, preparing himself even at this date for preaching the Gospel." This shows that even before he left for France and Italy in about 1492 or 1493, Colet had already decided to specialise in preaching to the laity in English, since the English poets would obviously not improve his Latin style. Sir Thomas More's letter of 1504 shows that Colet was preaching in English at his parish of Stepney before he became Dean of St. Paul's. Cf. E. F. Rogers, ed. *Correspondence of Thomas More*, ep. 3, pp. 7-8; *Selected Letters* (New Haven, 1967), ep. 3, pp. 5-6. More speaks on behalf of all lay hearers of Colet, many of whom could not, like More himself, understand Latin.

> O covetousness! Saint Paul justly called thee the root of all evil. From thee derives this heaping up of benefices upon benefices. From thee comes these great pensions assigned from benefices which have been resigned [for precisely this purpose]. From thee derives all the sueing for tithes, offerings, mortuaries, and delapidations by the law and title of the Church, for which things we strive as though our very lives were at stake. O covetousness! From you come these expensive episcopal visitations. From you come the corruption of the [ecclesiastical] courts and these daily new [money-raising] inventions with which the wretched laity [miser populus] are so encumbered. From you derive the shamelessness and capriciousness of [ecclesiastical] officials. O covetousness, mother of all iniquity! From you comes this fervent study of ordinaries to increase their jurisdictions; from you comes this insane and diseased contention among ordinaries concerning the settlement of wills; from you the intemperate sequestration of fruits. From you derives the superstitious observation of all those [canon] laws which are lucrative and the neglecting of those which aim at the improvement of morals. What remains to be said? To summarise and conclude in one word: all corruption and ruin in the Church and all the scandals in the world derive from the covetousness of the priests, in accordance with that Pauline statement which I repeat again and beat into your ears: Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas. 57

Colet may sound extreme here in attributing omnia mundi scandala as well as omnis ecclesiae ruina to priestly worldliness; but this is precisely the view of the priesthood maintained in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the Pseudo-Dionysius. For Dionysius, the whole cosmos is the great spiritual Church of God and it is the task of the priestly

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57. Knight, p. 242; Lupton, p. 296. I have translated Colet's Latin into modern English since the sixteenth-century translation does not always produce the exact meaning of the original. Thus "ex te in ordinariis ista insana et rabiosa contentio de insinuatione testamentorum" was translated "Of the cometh this woode and ragenge contention in ordinaries; of the, insinuation of testamentes. . . " But Colet had directly attributed the insinuatio testamentorum to the bishops as judges ordinary in the ecclesiastical courts. Translations of this kind again show that the English translation was done by another hand, probably that of Lupset, and almost certainly after Colet's death in 1519 since he would have checked the translation.

part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to draw the fallen visible world and the more carnal laity back to God. It was precisely this extremely high Dionysian view of the *sacerdotium*, which was also a very important basis of the claims of the papacy and clergy in the canon law, which caused Colet to have so little sympathy with the secularized frailties of the churchmen of his day. For him, as for Dionysius, the spiritual man or cleric must be entirely spiritual or perfect, and the higher his ecclesiastical rank, the higher the required degree of perfection. Although the secular priest is necessarily in the world he must remain above its evil "waves."[58] This is a very far cry from Luther's doctrine of imputed righteousness.

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[58] Cf. *In Eccl. Hier.* c. 5 on the *functio sacerdotalis* and c. 7 on the proper juridical function of the bishops according to Colet's interpretation of Dionysius. *Two Hierarchies*, ed. Lupton, pp. 232-48; 262-65. "Hence we may see how high, how exalted, how wholly conversant in heaven should a bishop be, especially the highest bishop whom we are accustomed to call the pope; so that what by his authority he diffuses over the Church, vivifying it to eternal life, he should draw wholly from God, digest it when so drawn, and justly and lawfully distribute it [the grace of the Holy Spirit] through all the members. . . . If he is a lawful bishop [pontifex] he does nothing of himself, but God acts in him. But if he does attempt anything of himself, he is then a breeder of poison. And if he also bring this to birth and carries his own will into execution, he is wickedly distilling poison, to the destruction of the Church. In fact this has been going on for many years, and has now such a powerful hold on the Church that unless . . . the Mediator Jesus who alone can do so help at once, our most disordered Church cannot be far from death. [Bishops] release and rebind men not from faith in God by whom these things are tied in heaven, but as they themselves wish. Hence everything is deranged on earth. They are not executors of the divine will, but actors on their own behalves. . . . But the true bishop and lawful overseer and faithful steward of the mysteries of God does nothing except following God." *Ibid.*, pp. 149-52. The power of the keys, to bind and loose in canon law, is given to all bishops including the *summus pontifex* only to reflect the divine will and law by means of the Holy Spirit in him. He must do this in accordance with the canonical Scriptures. The oral tradition may supplement but never contradict these; because the canonical Scriptures are totally inspired by God the Holy Spirit, who is One.

The fourth and last worldly evil of the clergy which deforms the face of the Church, Christ's Bride, and requires spiritual reform is the secular occupation in which priests and bishops are continually involved to such a degree that they have become servants of men rather than of God, soldiers of this world instead of soldiers of Christ. Here Colet strikes the note which is struck even more loudly in his shorter commentary on _Romans_ and locates the main obstacle to that Catholic reformation of the English Church under episcopal leadership which he sought. The bishops to whom he was speaking in Convocation were indeed first and foremost the servants of their secular monarch, King Henry VIII, and almost all of them had been provided to their sees by the Crown for precisely this purpose. Because during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the papacy had agreed to make canonical provision of the royal nominee in the case of all the most important benefices, especially the bishoprics, the bishops so chosen were, as Colet says, not free agents for leading a reformation of the _ecclesia Anglicana_, although they could certainly have done much more than they did. Colet's Dionysian idealization of the _sacerdotium_ prevented him from accepting what had become a _fait accompli_ in England by the early sixteenth century. This would again be shown in his brave attempt to prevent Henry VIII from carrying out his invasion of France in his sermon before the King and court of Good Friday, 1513.[59] The growing centralization and secularization of the English State and Church by 1511 was such that the papacy did not have the power, even if it had had the will, to prevent the English bishops from being primarily faithful royal ministers and civil servants, or, in Colet's language, being sunk in the waves of this world. Colet probably knew Wolsey, now just beginning his rise in power, from their days at Oxford. If so, he may have already foreseen the disaster to his Catholic view of the Church which would be caused by the rise of this most extreme example of the churchman as royal servant, who exemplified in his person almost all the evils of a secularized clergy which Colet enumerates in the Convocation Sermon.

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[59] The only primary source for this sermon is the summary of it given by Erasmus in his biographical epistle to Justus Jones. Cf. Allen, IV, pp. 525-26; tr. in Olin, _op_. _cit_., pp. 189-91.

Colet's words regarding the fourth and worst evil for the Church of the secularization of the clergy are as follows:

> The fourth secular evill which spots and deforms the Church's face is the continual secular business in which priests and bishops occupy themselves these days, servants of men rather than of God, soldiers of this world rather than soldiers of Christ. For the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy; "no one who fights for God entangles himself in worldly affairs." For God's soldiers are priests, and their battle is not carnal but spiritual. For our warfare [militia] is to pray, to read and to meditate on the Scriptures, to administer the Word of God, to administer the sacraments of salvation, to sacrifice for the people, and to offer hosts for their sins. For we are the mediators and means to God on behalf of men, as Paul testifies in his letter to the Hebrews. 60

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60. Knight, pp. 242-43; Lupton, 296-97. The sixteenth century translation omits totally the line "Milites autem Dei sacerdotes sunt." (Knight, p. 243). It is probable that the translation was made as part of Henry VIII's campaign against the clergy, in which case this would have been an inconvenient line.

Colet then cites a passage from the Vulgate version of Hebrews, which, unlike Erasmus, he believed was written by St. Paul, "Every bishop [pontifex] drawn from among men is ordained on behalf of men in those things which are towards God, so that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." It was for this reason, according to Colet, that the Apostles who were the first Christian priests and bishops, shrank from all handling of worldly things to such a degree that they refused to administer food to the poor personally, even though to have done so would have been a great work of piety (magnum opus pietatis). Instead the Acts of the Apostles tell us that they said, "it is not fitting that we should leave God's Word and serve tables; but we will spend our time in continual prayer and serving the Word of God." Similarly, Paul tells the Corinthians, "If you have any secular affairs, appoint those to judge them who are the more disdained in the Church."[61] It is because priests and clerks have ignored what for Colet is the plain teaching of the New Testament and have involved themselves in worldly affairs (occupationibus terrenis) that the evils so evident in the contemporary Church have arisen. Colet proceeds to list six of these evil consequences of the secularization of the clergy.

The first evil consequence again shows how firmly Colet holds to the Dionysian and traditional view of the priesthood. The dignity of the priesthood (dignitas sacerdotalis) is in itself greater than that of Kings or Emperors and is equal with the dignity of the angels, but it is dishonoured by continual secular involvement. Colet has in mind here Dionysius' doctrine that the ecclesiastical hierarchy is in principle the exact image on earth of the celestial hierarchy. This interpretation is supported by the fact that like Dionysius he interprets this priestly eminentia in terms of spiritual light. The shining splendor of the sacerdotal dignity is obscured in darkness when priests whose conversation ought to be in heaven are turned around into worldly things.[62]

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[61] Knight, p. 243.

A second evil consequence of this confusion of functions between the sacerdotium and the laity is that the priesthood has come to be despised by the laity. The third evil consequence listed by Colet again shows the continuing influence in 1512 of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in his ecclesiology. The pulcher ordo hierarchicus in the Church has become evilly disordered now that her highest officials handle vile and earthly things, while in their place vile and despicable persons exercise the highest and heavenly functions.[63] A fourth evil is that the lay people are caused to stumble and pushed toward destruction when those whose proper function it is to draw men away from this world by their own continual involvement in this world teach men to love it, so that through their love of the world they are cast headlong into hell.[64] A fifth consequence is that priests thus involved in worldly things must necessarily be hypocrites; for although they wear the habits of priests and are therefore thought to lead the priestly life they are in fact leading completely secular lives. Colet holds that it is the spiritual weakness which is the consequence of this mode of life which has enervated the clergy and made them unable to do or say anything except what is pleasant for their secular princes to hear. Another result, in accordance with the illuminist epistemology which Colet derives from Dionysius and Augustine, is that priests are necessarily in intellectual as well as spiritual darkness and ignorance; since being blinded by the darkness of this world they are unable to ascend to the mystical sight of heavenly things.

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[62] Ibid., p. 243.

[63] "Secundo, sacerdotium contemnitur, quando nihil interest inter tales sacerdotes et laicos. . . . Tertio, pulcher ordo hierarchicus in ecclesia confunditur, quando summi in ecclesia tractant vilia et terrena, et loco eorum viles et abjectae personae exercent summa et coelestia." Ibid., p. 243. For the Dionysian concept of beauty, see Caroline C. Putnam, Beauty in the Pseudo-Denis (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), esp. p. 62. The beauty of the hierarchic ordering of the cosmos is a function of the divine beauty in Dionysius, so that to disrupt this is to disrupt God's intention for the world. Cf. Cel. Hier., III, 2. 165B.

There are many other evils which are the result of the worldliness of the _sacerdotium_, but the complete list would be too long to relate in a single sermon. He therefore ends at this juncture the first part of his sermon on conformity to this world. But he tells the Convocation that the destructive effect upon the contemporary Church of the worldliness of the clergy is much more deleterious in its result than earlier persecutions by tyrants or assaults by heretics.[65] For the Church emerged from the persecution by tyrants in its early years stronger and more illustrious, and attacks by heretics eventually made the Church wiser and more learned in Holy Scriptures, since they forced Catholics to study them more carefully. But the "most evil worldliness" of the early sixteenth-century clergy is a yet more pernicious kind of evil than these, since the secular manner of living has by now extinguished Christian charity itself, which, Colet maintains, is the very root of all spiritual life. When charity, the sanctifying virtue, is taken away, the Church is unable to be either wise or strong in God.[66] The loss of the sanctifying virtue of charity in the priests, the leaders of the laity in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, is getting to the stage of the total destruction of the Church. Unless the bishops, the leaders of the Church, do something about it with the aid of Christ, the Church's creator, the Church will be utterly ruined. This is clearly Colet's view if we read the Convocation sermon together with his statements concerning the Church in his other theological writings.[67]

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[64] Knight, pp. 243-44.

[65] _Ibid._, p. 244.

Thus Colet subordinates all the other problems of the Church in 1511 to the problem of the worldliness of the clergy, who must return to their original spiritual and ascetic ideal as Colet believes that it is stated in the Bible and the early Church Fathers. Thus the problems of the insubordination of the laity and heresy, to deal with which the Convocation was called, are for Colet secondary problems which he believes will be easily resolved if the clerical reformation in accordance with the New Testament and patristic ideal takes place. He is convinced that the antagonism of the laity against the clergy is not really directed against the sacerdotium as such, but against their evil moral life "the whiche is contrary to God and Christ."[68] Although Colet calls the contemporary heretics (i.e., the Lollards) who attack the Church "marvellously stupid "; nevertheless their destructive and dangerous heresy is not so dangerous to the Church as are the evil and depraved lives of the priests, which St. Bernard of Clairvaux maintained was the greatest and most pernicious heresy of all. For an evil life is worse than evil doctrine; and since the task of the clergy is to set the example for the laity, the evil example of bad clerical lives leads the people astray more than bad teaching. It was for this reason that St. Bernard said that there are many who are Catholics in their speaking and their preaching, who are in fact heretics in their works. These are as much worse than doctrinal heretics as works or deeds are more important than words.[69] St. Bernard, a "holy father " of authority, showed plainly that there are two kinds of heretical depravity, perverse doctrine and perverse life, and the latter, which reigns in the

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[66] Loc. cit. This statement is consistent with Colet's entire theology as worked out under the influence of the threefold mystical way of Dionysius. Strength is preeminently the virtue received from the Father, wisdom that from the Son, and love or charity from the Holy Spirit, and these three degrees work in man as purgation, illumination, and sanctification respectively. Charity is thus all-essential for the perfect or sanctified life which God requires of man. See esp. Enarr. I Cor., c.13, ed. Lupton, pp. 256 f. This passage in the Convocation Sermon shows once again that the influence of Dionysius upon Colet's view of the priesthood and the Church continues; since about ten years had passed since Grocyn had denied the subapostolic authority of the Pseudo-Dionysius.

[67] Cf, In Eccl. Hier., c.7.3. p. 151, where Colet says that

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because the bishops, including the pope, have been distilling poison into the vains of the Church for such a long time "unless that Mediator who alone can do so, who created and founded the Church out of nothing for himself (this is why St. Paul often calls her a 'creature') -- unless, I say, the Mediator Jesus help with all speed, our most disordered Church cannot be far from death."

[68] Knight, p. 244.

[69] Cf. Knight, pp. 244-45; Lupton, pp. 298-299.

contemporary priesthood, is the worst evil of all. Bishops, priests, and the entire clerical hierarchy must at last wake up to the fact, and open their ears to the words of Paul calling to them now for the reformation of the Church, just as he wrote to the Romans in his own day.[70]

The Second Part of the Convocation Sermon: *de reformatione*

The second part of Paul's command to the clergy in Rom. 12:2, according to Colet, is that having left all conformity to this world and secular life they should be re-formed into Christ through a total renovation of their minds in things of God. This means that all priests must be totally changed or re-formed into the true form which the Holy Spirit, who is grace itself, imposes upon the whole Church by His presence in it. This new spiritual form is only to be gained by striving to the utmost of one's God-given power to co-operate or collaborate with the Spirit. To the precise degree that one strives to the utmost to become spiritually perfect, the grace of the Spirit will increasingly empower a cleric to reach the highest degree of perfection of which he is capable, given his rank or status in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This spiritual reformation of the Church which must begin with the heads of the clergy, the prelates, is the exact opposite of the secularization or conformity to the world of the so-called spirituality which Colet has described in the first part of the sermon. What is necessary is a development of the priestly virtues of humility, sobriety, charity, and spiritual occupation only, of which St. Paul wrote in his Epistle to Titus.[71]

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[70] Cf. Colet's earlier statement in this sermon: "For [the Apostle Paul], writing to the Romans, and *under their name to you*, says: 'Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your understanding. . . .'." Knight, p. 240 (italics mine).

The requisite re-formation or re-structuring of the Church to its true and original state as the Bride of Christ must necessarily begin with the prelates (praepositi), especially the bishops, because "you are the heads of the Church." For it is with the prelates or pontifices, according to the hierarchical order of the Church which is described by Dionysius, that the grace of reformation must emanate down to the priests and the entire clergy. In reading Colet's commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy it becomes clear that it is principally from the Pseudo-Denys that Colet derives his understanding of the proper kind and order of ecclesiastical reformation. It is obviously from this work that Colet's plan for reformation falls into the type of understanding of ecclesiastical authority in the post-Conciliar period which is called by Jedin episcopalism, which had become a dominant compromise between extreme papalism and extreme conciliarism by the end of the fifteenth century. Episcopalism was a variation on the traditional idea of a reformation which begins with the head (the pope) and extends down the organic Body of the Church to the lower members that had originally been proposed to the Council of Vienne by Guillaume Durandus in his _De modo concilii generalis celebrandi_.[72] According to episcopalism, the entire episcopate rather than the papacy alone would lead reformation as heads of the Church or pontiffs. We consider that it is this episcopalist view of authority in the ecclesiastical hierarchy which, together with the increasing nationalism of the English Church during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, explains Colet's extremely cautious and even ambiguous statements about the papal authority in his extant writings. It also explains the fact, which agrees with Colet's total acceptance of the _Ecclesiastical Hierarchy_ as the clearest description of the structure of the "pristine" Church, that Colet always treats the papacy in the context of the episcopal authority in the Church. The Latin translations of the _Ecclesiastical Hierarchy_ had translated the _hierarchs_ of Dionysius as _pontifices_ or bishops. In his most explicit treatments of the papacy in the commentaries on chapters 3 and 7 of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy Colet in both cases treats the pope or summus pontifex as simply the highest legal authority among the bishops who as hierarchs, pontiffs, or high priests are collectively the heads of the Church. Unfortunately, in the Convocation Sermon Colet is only discussing the reformation of the ecclesia Anglicana, so that he never explicitly touches on the power of the papacy except that his prayer for the pope precedes that for the bishops of the Church. The next prayer is for Archbishop Warham as primate of England, legatus natus and president of the Convocation of the province of Canterbury. Nevertheless in the commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius, Colet makes clear that he accepts the juridical authority of the chief pontiff who has a preeminent legal authority over the bishops, just as in the subapostolic Church, at the time of Dionysius, the various bishops were delegated by the universal Catholic Church a preeminent legal authority in the various dioceses over the rest of the priesthood. But so far as sacramental dignity and function is concerned, Colet interprets Dionysius to mean that all priests are on an equal footing because they all equally perform the highest office of performing the sacrifice of the Eucharist and making the Body of Christ.[73] The episcopal authority of the heads of the Church is thus totally juridical, based on the canon or pontifical law, and not owing to a separate sacramental function from the rest of the sacerdotium. Nevertheless, reform of the Church for Colet always means a return to the "beautiful hierarchical order" described by Dionysius, and must begin at the top with the pontiffs or bishops. It would be interesting to investigate how far the whole concept of reformation beginning at the top and spreading down to the members was influenced by the Pseudo-Areopagite, but we are able to say that it was unquestionably a basic influence upon Colet's episcopalist concept of reformation.

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[71] ". . . ut quemadmodum scribit idem Paulus ad Titum, 'Abnegnantes impietatem et secularia desideria, sobriç et juste et pie vivamus in hoc seculo." (Cf. Vulgate Titus 2:12). Knight, p. 245.

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[72] Cf. Jedin, _History of Trent_, I, p. 8, who states that in this tract Durandus the Younger laid down the principle that the reform of the Church must proceed from the head, that is, the Roman Church. The pope must provide the pattern for the reformation of the rest of the Church by his faithful adherence to the "ancient" ecclesiastical law. Already with Durandus this observance of the ancient canon law is almost identical with the strengthening of the authority of the entire episcopate. Cf. Colet in Knight, _loc. cit._: "Haec autem reformatio et restauratio ecclesiastici status, oportet, incipiat a vobis patribus nostris; et sic deinceps in nos sacerdotes vestros, et in totum clerum derivetur. Vos enim estis capita nostra."

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[73] Cf. In Eccl. Hier. c. 3. 2, pp. 83-4, where Colet cites Jerome's letter to Evragius as maintaining that all priests were originally equal in rank, but that immediately after the Apostolic Age the immediate followers of the Apostles (including Dionysius) chose one priest "and placed him at the head for the settling of disputes, the appeasing of strife and the putting an end to contentions by his opinion and sentence so that the Church might remain

According to Colet's Convocation Sermon, again following Dionysius, the re-forming of the Church to its pristine pulcher ordo hierarchicus under the leadership of the capita means that the bishops must begin the reformation by the reform of their own lives to the perfection in charity which is required of all pontiffs or high priests of the Church.

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in harmony. This man is not superior to other priests in office and dignity, but rather in . . . authority in quelling disputes. . . . He then began to be especially called bishop, a name which belonged to all priests under the Apostles, until there was chosen the one whom I have mentioned. . . " Thus Colet understands the development of the legal preeminency of the pope over the other bishops as parallel to the earlier legal preeminence given the bishops over all priests. This authority is completely legal and is written into the Canon Law. Cf. In Eccl. Hier. c. 3. 3, pp. 220, 219; c. 5. 1, pp. 241, 242; c. 7, pp. 263-65, and compare with the Convocation Sermon in Knight, pp. 243, 246, 248. In his discussion of the sacrament of Eucharist or Synaxis in c. 5 of his commentary on the Eccl. Hier., Colet explains that the priestly act of making the Lord's Body at the Mass is the highest function in the Church and imitates the Apostles. This is why in the Convocation Sermon he also maintains that all priests and not just the bishops are in the apostolic succession.

The bishops must set the pattern of holy living (exemplus vivendi) for all the lower clergy and, further down, the laity through their perfect imitation to the highest degree of their abilities of the human life of the incarnate Christ. Like Dionysius again, Colet never divorces morality from doctrine in his view of the sanctified or perfect life which is expected of the bishops. Doctrine or right teaching in the Church must be learnt from living examples of perfection in faith and charity. Theory and practice, faith and charity, justification and sanctification can never be divorced. Thus in the Convocation Sermon he tells the bishops that they must begin the necessary reformation of the Church by sanctifying their lives so as to become living books from which the lower clergy may learn perfection of both life and doctrine. The prelates must play the role of spiritual physicians of the diseased organism of the diseased Body of Christ, the Church. After they have healed themselves with the medicine of purified and sanctified behavior which will bring the grace of the Holy Spirit into their hearts, they can then, in accordance with the just order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, infuse the priests and the lower clergy with the same medicine of salvation and reform.[74]

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[74] "Vos [patres] estis exemplar vivendi nobis. Ad vos spectamus tanquam ad signa directionis nostrae. In vobis et in vita vestra cupimus legere tanquam in vivis libris quonam pacto ipsi vivamus. . . . Est autem antiquum proverbium, 'Medice, cura teipsum.' Vos medici spirituales, primum degustate vos istud pharmicum expurgationis morum, et deinde idem nobis degustandum propinetis." Knight, p. 245.

Colet holds that the way to re-form the Church is not, as had often been suggested, to establish new canon laws in council or convocation. His close study of the canon law showed that those canons which had already been given, if properly obeyed, would be quite sufficient to deal with all the ruinous diseases in the Church's organism. Colet maintains that, destructive to the Church though they are, all the diseases which characterize the early sixteenth-century Church have appeared before in the past centuries: -- there is no kind of error for which the Fathers of the Church (including popes) have not already provided the best remedies in previous conciliar decrees which have been collected in the Canon Law. For instance, all the laws necessary for restraining spiritual transgressions are already incorporated into the corpus juris canonici.[75] There is thus no need for Convocation to make new laws and constitutions to bring about reform. Nevertheless Colet does believe that the correct way to reform the Church is to bring about a genuine obedience to those decrees which are, as it were, already in the statute-books of the Canon Law. Rather than make new laws, the pertinent canons which explicitly prohibit the evils current in the Church which he has already described in the first part of the sermon must be read out to the Convocation so that the prelates can take the lead in acting upon them. Colet's practical program for reformation is thus based upon the canon or pontifical law which, as he explains in his shorter commentary on Romans, is the logical extension and explication of the canonical law of the New and Old Covenants. He is very far from agreeing with Luther that the legal understanding of righteousness as justice goes against the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. For Colet, as for Augustine and the medieval Catholic tradition, justification by faith literally means a being made just through the infused grace of the Holy Spirit, so that the justified Christian is able through the divine help to obey the corpus juris canonici if he truly wills to do so.

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[75] "Via autem qua reformetur ecclesia, et in meliora forma restituatur, non est quidem condere novas leges: sunt enim leges satis multae et numerosae. . . . Nam morbi qui nunc sunt in ecclesia, antea in praeteritis seculis fuerunt. Et nullum est erratum cui patres in corpore juris canonici non extant leges cohibitrices." Knight, pp. 245-46.

Colet now proceeds to give a long list of those canons which he believes must be read out, reappropriated by the heads of the English Church in Convocation, and acted upon at once if the ecclesia Anglicana is to be reformed into its pristine state of grace. The first set of these laws which must be read out to remedy the disorders caused by the secularization of the clergy are those which admonish bishops not to ordain men too easily. Colet holds that the root cause of the deterioration of the standards of the clergy so evident at the time is that ordination is permitted far too readily. Everywhere in the Church everyone who offers himself is admitted without a proper examination of either his morals or his knowledge of Christian doctrine. This is the source of the huge crowd of both ill-instructed and wicked priests in the contemporary Church.[76] Like Dionysius, Colet is Platonist in the close connection which he sees between the ignorance and the evil behavior of the clergy. However, we must remember that Richard Hunne of London, awaiting examination for heresy in 1514, was almost certainly ordered murdered in the ecclesiastical prison at the behest of the vicar-general and Chancellor of the Bishop of London, who violently defended his clerk. Furthermore, English criminals regularly protected themselves from secular courts by entering minor orders. Thus it is clear that Colet is not exaggerating in this regard. He tells the bishops of the province of Canterbury that it is not enough for a priest merely to be able to construe a collect, to propose a quaestiunculum or to respond to one sophism as an adequate preparation for holy orders. Bishops should instead test whether ordinands lead good, pure, and holy lives, have approved morals, a fair knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments, and above all that they should fear God and have a love for the heavenly or spiritual life.[77]

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[76] "Non est opus ergo ut condantur novae leges et constitutiones; sed ut serventur conditae. Quare in ista vestra congregatione vocentur in medium, et recitentur leges quae sunt editae; quae prohibent mala, quaeque bona praecipiunt.

Imprimis, recitentur leges illae quae admonent vos, patres, ne manus vestras cito alicui imponatis, admittatisve ad sacros ordines. Nam illic fons malorum est; quod aperta janua sacrorum ordinum, omnes qui se offerunt, passim sine repulsa admittuntur." Knight, p. 246. Cf. Script. ad Rom., c. 4, pp. 139-40, where Colet maintains the absolute superiority of the canon law over every other kind of law because it is the law of God which explicates the lex nova of the New Covenant.

[77] Knight, loc. cit. Cf. Lupton, Life, p. 300.

Those canons should next be openly recited in Convocation which command that benefices be conferred only on those who have shown themselves worthy of them, and that ecclesiastical promotions be conferred only on those who are worthy of them on the basis of a proper examination of virtue and not through nepotism ("carnal affection") and favoritism. For these last are the reasons that young boys, ignorant fools, and evil men have the authority to rule the contemporary Church. Convocation should then hear the canons which forbid the sin of simony, or trafficking in ecclesiastical offices. Colet says that the cancer of simony is so imbued in the clergy that many priests will stop at literally nothing to get promoted to higher dignities in the Church.

Those laws must also be read to Convocation which require the personal residence in their own Churches of all those clergy who have cure of souls (curati).[78] The widespread absenteeism of incumbents is the reason that almost all ecclesiastical functions in the parishs are performed by vicars and substitutes. These men are not only ill-trained, underpaid, and usually ill-suited to their work, but they are often also morally corrupt, their only interest in the laity being in their money. The bad examples given to the people by such pastors is the real cause of the scandals, heresies, and bad Christianity in the laity, who find no leadership in their religion from such clergy.

Consequently, those canons should next be read out to the Convocation which describe in detail the requirements of the clerical life. These laws specifically prohibit a cleric from being a merchant, a usurer, or a hunter. They also prohibit clergy from bearing weapons, frequenting taverns, and having "suspect familiarity" with young women. Furthermore, they command observance of sobriety and modesty in clerical clothing.

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[78] Knight, p. 246.

After this those canon laws should be recited which regulate the monastic and other religious orders. These command that monks are to leave this world and enter the narrow way which leads to eternal life. They forbid them to pursue any kind of business either secular or ecclesiastical, or to sue in the courts of princes in secular matters, as they commonly do. Colet points out that the canons of the Council of Chalcedon state that monks are to give themselves up entirely to prayer and fasting, the chastising of their flesh, and the observance of their monastic disciplines and Rules. This statement shows the substantial accuracy of the statement of Erasmus in the letter to Justus Jonas that Colet would have himself entered a monastery had he been able to find one which genuinely obeyed its Rule. At the end of his life he built a "nest" or apartment in the Carthusian monastery at Shene which he planned to occupy on his retirement from the deanship of St. Paul's; although it is uncertain whether he ever in fact did so. It was no chance that the Carthusians were the strictest of all the religious orders in England and bore the proud motto of having never been reformed because they had adhered to their Rule and had never become deformed. Colet also attempted to revive the semi-monastic Rule of the Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral, which caused the Canons to complain that he was turning them into monks.[79]

But, most important of all, those laws should be read out which pertain to the lord bishops themselves. These include those that ordain the just and canonical election of bishops in their cathedral chapters through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, instead of the royal appointment of them at secular functions as was now often the case. Colet tells the bishops to their faces that it is because the proper capitular elections are regularly ignored and prelates are more often chosen because of human favor than by divine grace that there is such a large number of barely spiritual bishops in the English Church in 1511. These men (and Colet is addressing them in the Convocation) are wise in the ways of this world rather than spiritually wise in the Holy Spirit of Christ. Those laws should also be recited which require bishops to be resident in their dioceses rather than in London with the royal court, thereby showing that they are servants of the King rather than of God, spending their time on royal business and non-diocesan activities. The canon law states and commands that bishops supervise the salvation of souls and preach the Word of God in their dioceses. They are also required by it to appear in their own cathedrals at least on the major feast days, to perform the sacrifice of the Mass for their people, to hear the cases of the poor in their diocesan courts, to support widows and orphans financially, and to exert themselves continually in good works. Furthermore the appropriate laws should be read out which require bishops to make the proper distribution of the Church's wealth, of which they are the stewards. These canons state that these goods of the Church are not to be spent on erecting expensive buildings, clothes, banquets, luxuries, lasciviousness, and the enriching of the Bishop's relatives. These are sections of the canon law which, as Colet would have been well aware, applied to the summus pontifex Julius II as much as to the other bishops; although he is here specifically concerned with the bishops of the English Church. This is made especially clear by the fact that in this discussion of the canonical requirements for the distribution of ecclesiastical wealth, Colet cites the answer which Pope Gregory the Great gave to the Apostle to the English and first archbishop of Canterbury, Augustine, which has legal force because it is incorporated in the Decreta. Augustine had asked the pope who had sent him to convert the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes how he should divide the goods of the Church in his keeping. St. Gregory's reply, Colet notes, is found at Chapter XII, question 2, of the Decrees. Gregory there states that episcopal goods, which are the gifts of the laity to the Church, are to be divided into four parts. Only one of these parts is the bishop to spend on himself and his familia or household. A second quarter is to be spent on the other clergy of his diocese, a third quarter for the repair of churches, and a fourth quarter is to be given as charity to the poor. We see here once again Colet's concern to return to the practices of the primitive Church. In this case the canon law gives binding authority to the decision which the pope enjoined upon the first Anglorum episcopus.

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[79] Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 523; J.C. Olin, Christian Humanism, p. 187.

At this point Colet reaches a crescendo in his sermon in proclaiming that the ancient canon laws must be read out to the Convocation over and over again which prohibit the filthy abuses of the contemporary ecclesiastical courts (sordes et spucitias curiarum), with their ever-new devices for extorting more and more money from the lay people. An equally impassioned passage on this same subject is to be found in the concluding pages of his shorter commentary on Romans, which, because of its similarity of language to the Convocation Sermon, would appear to date from about the same period. In this final passage of the Scripta ad Romanos, Colet says that the doctors of the canon law are in fact the last to teach this law to the laity; instead they leave this task to the professores theologiae -- like Colet himself. They should in fact be styled tortores or tormentors of men rather than doctores or learned men.

> For all they heed is, where they may punish with the law's scourges and wound with its knife in order to drain the golden blood of the laity. They so eagerly thirst for this that one might suppose that they held their . . . title as lawyers and their profession of jurisprudence for no other purpose than like bloodsuckers to render men bloodless and penniless by never ending monetary fines; while they themselves are swollen with thefts and robberies. 80

It is important to stress that Colet continues the Scripta with words explaining the ever-increasing feelings of the laity against the clergy at a time when he himself was loved by the London laity. Despite his respect for the canon law and his belief that the necessary

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80. Scripta Ioannis Colet, Professoris Theologiae, in Epistolam Divi Pauli ad Romanos, c. 5, tr. Lupton, pp. 162-63.

reformation of the Church should be achieved by returning to its letter, Colet ends his Scripta ad Romanos with a blistering attack upon both the canon lawyers and the modus operandi of the ecclesiastical courts in England in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. In the process he shows his complete sympathy with the laity, rather than with the doctors of canon law. Speaking of the latter he writes

> Atrocious race of men! deadliest plague to the Church of Christ! Very devils, changed into angels of light! Indeed in this regard worse than even the devils themselves and more hurtful to the Christian laity, because through the position which they falsely hold in the Church no one can safely despise them openly, but all must put his neck under their sword -- the sword of bad example, and of pecuniary fines and extortion. O hardship beyond all hardships when the poor lay people who bear Christ's name are in a worse situation than the Jewish common people were under the hypocritical Pharisees. 81

In the Convocation Sermon Colet makes quite clear that he holds the bishops responsible for these extortions by the ecclesiastical lawyers, since they could control their diocesan courts. It is unfortunate that we do not know whether Colet's Scripta ad Romanos addressed to his young friend Edmund was written before or after the Hunne Affair; since the Bishop of London's prison in which Hunne was probably murdered was adjacent to the Dean's cathedral and Colet was surely profoundly moved by the case. What is clear is that although he thoroughly believed, especially under the influence of Dionysius, that the spirituality as an order were superior to the entire laity including kings and the Holy Roman Emperor; he thoroughly sympathised

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81. Ibid., p. 163.

with the laity regarding the exactions of the courts Christian--as they were known in England. It seems to have been because of outspoken opinions of this kind and his regular ~~sermons~~ to the laity in English that the Lollards favored Colet's English sermons; and not because he was in any sense a Lollard himself, other than in agreeing with many of his contemporaries concerning the moderate and orthodox criticisms of the contemporary Church which had been made by Wyclif and his followers. In the Convocation Sermon he calls on the bishops themselves to come to their right minds and to enforce the canon laws which would eradicate from the Church courts "this foul avarice . . . which is the source of all iniquity." [82]

Colet's final appeal to the prelates for a reformation of the Church by means of a return to the commands of canon law is to urge that those general canon laws and constitutions be read out to the Convocation which decree the frequent celebration of ecclesiastical councils, especially those which require more frequent provincial councils or convocations for the specific purpose of the reformation of the Church. Colet once again shows himself a moderate conciliarist like many other reformers throughout Europe on the eve of the Protestant Reformation by appealing to the spirit of the decree *Frequens* of the Council of Constance, rather than to *Sacrosancta*, which attempted to override the papal authority completely by that of the General Council. Colet tells the prelates of the southern and by far the more important province of the English Church that nothing can be more detrimental to Christ's Church than the omission of either General or provincial Councils.[83] It is probable that he stresses the provincial council here because of his audience and the almost complete autonomy of the English Church from papal rule by the beginning of the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, as we have seen, Colet nowhere discusses the relation of the papal authority to that of the General Council in his writings which have come down to us; but he does say that the early Catholic Church delegated supreme legal authority to the pope;and in the Convocation Sermon he stresses the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was a papal legate as well as primate of England, was empowered to call the Provincial Convocation and had commanded Colet to preach to it. There is, in fact, little doubt that Colet would recognise the full power of the pope to convoke the General Council just as Archbishop Warham was fully empowered to convoke the Convocation of the province or archdiocese of Canterbury. This is all the more likely since Colet shows such great respect for the canon law and since we are aware of the almost consistent papalism of the English Church during the conciliar epoch after Constance. Strict conciliarism in the sense of maintaining that the authority of the General Council is canonically above that of the pope seems never to have had any notable adherents in England after

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[82] " . . . istam tetram avaritiam . . . quae est fons totius iniquitatis," Knight, p. 248.

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83. "Renoventur postremo illae leges et constitutiones patrum de celebratione conciliorum; quae jubent ut provincialia concilia frequentius pro reformatione ecclesiae celebrentur: nam nunquam accidit ecclesiae Christi res magis detrimentosa quam omissio conciliorum, tum generalium, tum provincialium." Knight, p. 248; English translation, Lupton, Life, p. 302.

the Great Schism was healed at Constance in 1417, and in fact it was normal English foreign policy during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to ally with the pope against the traditional enemy, France. Since strict conciliarism was closely identified with Gallicanism, and since Erasmus stresses Colet's English patriotism in his account of the Dean's refounding of St. Paul's School, it is pretty certain that Colet was not a strict conciliarist. In fact, his call for frequent councils in the Convocation Sermon is the only place in his writings where he discusses church councils in the contemporary Church at all. As we have seen, Colet makes clear in his commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius that he accepts the dominant executive authority of the pope and bishops as the magisterium of the Church; and to this we may add that from the account which survives of his sermon in late 1515 on the occasion of Wolsey's accepting the red hat of the cardinalate, it is clear that Colet attributes to the rank of Cardinal bishop in the ecclesiastical hierarchy a place equivalent to the Seraphim, the first rank in the highest triad of angels in the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius. If this parallel between the two Dionysian hierarchies is maintained, the pope must necessarily be conceived as the Vicar of God on earth, since a Cardinal bishop is made the parallel of the highest angelic rank. It is unfortunate that we have nothing more than a layman's report of this sermon, in which Colet seems to have worked out in some detail his understanding of the parallels between the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

It thus seems to us clear that just as in the Convocation Sermon Colet appeals to the archbishop and bishops of the Canterbury archdiocese to convoke more frequent provincial and diocesan councils, so he would expect the summus pontifex or highest bishop in the Church militant, the pope, to call the more frequent General Councils which he desires to discuss the reformation of the universal or Catholic Church. As we have said, it is very probable that he supported the Fifth Lateran Council, which had been called by Julius II by the time of the Convocation Sermon, and which was attended by several English bishops. It is very unlikely that he would have supported the conciliabulum of Pisa, the main supporter of which was Louis XII of France.

We can say, then, that the Convocation Sermon shows Colet to have been a moderate Catholic reformer who desired to see a reformed papacy and episcopate take the lead, by virtue of the authority delegated to them by the universal Church, in the convocation of frequent reformatory councils on all ecclesiastical levels.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION. THE ECCLESIA ANGLICANA IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES AND THE ROLE OF COLET AS A CATHOLIC HUMANIST REFORMER.

We must conclude, however, that Colet's call for the reform of the Church in 1511/1512 was doomed to failure without royal support. To understand the reason for this it is necessary to examine the recent history of the English Church before Colet's day.

The growth of English nationalism during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had had the effect of nationalising the English Church. In order to understand this, as well as the obstacles in the way of the kind of reform for which Colet sought, it is necessary to understand the structure of the ecclesia Anglicana and the nature of its relations with both the Crown and the papacy by the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The period of the Avignon papacy (1309-1378) had also been the period in which the most extreme theoretical claims were made by the papacy as an institution. During this period the papacy had come under considerable attack from the English laity in Parliament, since it was believed with some justification in England that the French popes and cardinals of this period were using their spiritual powers to assist the French after 1329, in the Hundred Years' War. Already at the Parliament held at Carlisle in January 1307 a pamphlet had been read which violently attacked Pope Clement V. He was accused of systematically excluding native Englishmen from positions in the national Church and thus depriving the King of his accustomed counsel from the wise men of the realm, which thus damaged both the English Church and the royal government. This Parliament also attacked the contemporary attempts by the centralizing papacy to control all appointments (provisions) to benefices throughout the Universal Church. Although many parliamentary attacks of this type were exaggerated and not totally accurate, they were indicative of English public opinion regarding the papacy in the early fourteenth century in its support of the royal power over the ecclesia Anglicana at the expense of the papal authority. These complaints against the papacy would from this time be both continually reiterated by successive Parliaments and frequently repeated by English kings and chroniclers.

The anti-papal feeling among the lay nobility grew especially bitter during the reign of Clement VI(1342-52). Doubts were cast on the impartiality of a pope who had prior to his election been the Chancellor of King Philip VI of France, and it was well known that the French cardinals of this time were Anglophobes. It was believed in England that papal subsidies raised among the English clergy passed directly from the papal coffers to those of the French enemy; so that paying them was tantamount to supplying the French with arms. It was in retaliation against this that the Parliament of 1343 expressly forbade that any letters, briefs, legal suits, reservations, provisions, or any other (papal) documents contrary to the rights of the English Crown be allowed in the kingdom. This decree was at once put into effect.[1]

When hostilities were reopened against the French in 1346 Edward III confiscated all ecclesiastical benefices in England held by foreigners. This move was aimed primarily against the French cardinals. Then on February 9, 1351, the Parliament passed the first Statute of Provisors. This statute declared that if the pope by either provision or reservation opposed any election or presentation to a benefice which had been carried out in the normal manner and if the patrons of the benefices and the bishop did not exercise their respective rights in this regard within six months, the collation of the benefice would revert to the King or the lay noble who had originally had the feudal right of nomination. Anyone who contravened this statute was liable to imprisonment and fines. The great importance of this measure was not only that it abolished certain papal prerogatives in England; it also gave parliamentary blessing to the seizure of Church property by the State.[2] Edward III did not, however, put this legislation into effect. His policy seems rather to have been to hold the statute in reserve as an effective weapon against the papacy should the need arise; for the Parliaments were in fact much more virulently anti-papalist than the King.

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[1] Cf. J. Haller, Papsttum und Kirchenreform (Berlin, 1903), I, pp. 392; and G. Mollat, The Popes at Avignon 1305-1378, 9th ed., trans. J. Love (London, 1963), pp. 258-63.

[2] See Rotuli parliamentorum, vol. II, p. 232; cited by G. Mollat, op. cit., p. 264.

Parliament continued its attack against the next pope, Innocent VI. On September 23, 1353, the first statute of Praemunire was passed, which laid down especially strict rules regarding relations between English Church property and the papacy. This act was renewed in 1393 by the so-called Great Statute of Praemunire, and during the reign of Henry VIII the threat of its use against the clergy would eventually become the basis for severing the ecclesia Anglicana from the Roman jurisdiction. The statute of Praemunire stated that

> Whoever shall arraign the King's subjects in a foreign court [i.e., the papal curia] in matters the cognizance of which belongs to the King's courts, shall have two months to answer for the reason for his defiance. At the expiry of this term . . . he himself and his abbettors shall be outside the King's protection, his lands, merchandise, and chattels shall be forfeit to the King, and if he is seized he shall be imprisoned until he has paid a ransom fixed by the King.[3]

Both the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire were used by the monarchy primarily as bargaining counters with the papacy in the continual quid pro quo relationship which had been normal between the Crown and the popes ever since the Norman Conquest.

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[3] Statutes of the Realm, I, p. 329; cited by Mollat, p. 265.

Thus they were rarely applied by Edward III for more than a few months at a time and were not enforced after 1376. But what remained unchanged was the xenophobic English anti-papalism which the Kings were able to use to force from the papacy the concessions they wanted, and which was continually manifested by Parliament when it met.[4] For instance, when in 1366 Urban V demanded the English quota of papal taxes, now thirty-three years in arrears, Parliament passed an act which, if it had been enforced by the King, would have effectually abolished the sovereignty of the Roman Church in England.

The significant factor in the English anti-papalism of the fourteenth century was the very large role played in it by the laity. During the thirteenth century the Catholic Church had become highly organized in its structure and a minutely regulated system of ecclesiastical legislation had developed which the layman was expected to obey whenever he came under its jurisdiction. If he failed to do so he risked undergoing the charge of heresy. The clergy still argued that the duty of the laity was not to criticize but to obey. This was a relic of the earlier Middle Ages when the clergy acquired their authority not only because of their sacred calling, but also because of their virtual monopoly over literacy and learning which gave their higher members ascendency in political and social life as well. But by the fourteenth century laymen were becoming much more literate than ever before.[5] There was no general attack on the Church's doctrinal system until the time of Wyclif; but the dislike of the French papacy at Avignon during the fourteenth century did also begin to take the form of anticlericalism regarding English ecclesiastics. Furthermore the papacy had suffered great loss of spiritual prestige as the result of the abuse of its spiritual weapons, such as excommunication, during the thirteenth century. And even though lay dissatisfaction with the clergy over the question of jurisdiction over property had had a long history, by the early fourteenth century it had developed into a widespread feeling among the most important English laity that since the enormous lands and revenues which the clergy enjoyed had originally been donated by pious laymen, they might also be taken away by their descendants if they were misused.

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[4] Cf. A. R. Myers, England in the Late Middle Ages (1307-1536), 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 69f.

The Effect of the Great Schism on the Ecclesia Anglicana.

The already widespread anti-French and anti-papal feeling among the English laity, and even the clergy, which had developed during the period of strong French influence upon the Avignon papacy between 1305 and 1378 continued during the Great Schism, a period of extreme weakness for the papacy. Thus when Adam of Easton, an English monk who happened to be at Rome in 1378, was asked by a French cardinal what the King and leading men of England would think of the election of an Italian as Pope Urban VI, he replied that they would be very glad because "all the temporal lords of England considered the French pope and French cardinals to be greater enemies . . . than the King of France himself."[6] Adam's reply was no doubt exaggerated, but the increasingly strong national feeling in England at the beginning of the Great Schism is unquestioned. This national feeling was primarily directed against the French, the traditional national enemy ever since the Norman Conquest; and therefore also against a papacy which for more than seventy years had been dominated by French popes and a majority of French cardinals.

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[5] Cf. W. K. Ferguson, "The Church in a Changing World: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the Renaissance," *American Historical Review*, *59* (1953), pp. 1-18; and Mollat, *passim*. For King Henry II's annexation of the *jus patronatus* of ecclesiastical benefices to the jurisdiction of the temporal courts by the Assize of Darrein Presentment, cf. A. Ogle, *The Canon Law in Medieval England* (London, 1912), p. 58.

The Great Schism (1378-1417) in fact increased this already strong anti-papal feeling in England. For added to the scandal of rival popes and papal _curiae_ denouncing each other over a period of forty years and cheapening even further the spiritual weapons of the Church, there was the added grievance that both papal courts tried to maintain the previous level of papal income from their greatly reduced areas of obedience. In order to do this the popes tried desperately to increase their financial exactions on the various national Churches even further than before, with the result that they not only tolerated but even encouraged ecclesiastical abuses that would bring in revenue. In answer to this development Parliament in 1390 and 1393 passed even more stringent statutes of _Provisors_ and _Praemunire_. Richard II at once proceeded to use these as bargaining counters in his dealings with the papacy in the same way that his grandfather had done with the earlier measures of 1351 and 1353. In fact, by the last decade of the fourteenth century it was already evident that the papal authority in England could only endure so long as it better suited the King's interest to collaborate with the popes rather than to withdraw his allegiance.[7]

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[6] Cf. F. R. H. Du Boulay, "The Fifteenth Century," in _The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages_, ed. C. H. Lawrence (New York, 1965), p. 197.

This further growth of anti-papalism helps explain both why the Wycliffite movement came when it did and why Wyclif's radical theory that only a holy and moral clergy should be allowed to retain temporal lordship gained so much influence. Wyclif also continued the radical Franciscan tradition typified by William of Ockham in his doctrine that the secular power should decide whether or not an ecclesiastic might retain his temporal jurisdiction and property. Another reason for the development of Wycliffism by the 1370's was the Black Death, which encouraged a fatalist view of life and seems to have found intellectual expression in the revival of those Augustinian teachings which emphasized God's infinite power and overruling will. For during the fourteenth century not only scholastic theologians like Thomas Bradwardine and Richard Fitzralph but also mystics like Dame Juliana of Norwich emphasized the Augustinian doctrines of grace and election. These thinkers and writers were popularly venerated; however their works promoted tendencies which were dangerous to the existing social order; for the ecclesiastical authorities for the most part stressed instead the freedom of the will and the efficacy of the good works as these had been determined by the Church. Indeed divine grace had come by this time to be so strictly confined to prescribed ecclesiastical channels that it seemed to most of the laity to be law rather than grace. But the devotional piety of the English mystics of the fourteenth century answered men's need for a faith which appealed to the emotions and the individual conscience rather than to the laws of an authoritarian Church.

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[7] See Myers, _op. cit._, p. 70.

This development assisted the spread of Wycliffism, especially among the middle classes where it reinforced the already individualist, anti-clerical, and critical spirit. During the 1370's Wyclif was protected by John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and other lay aristocrats largely because his anti-clerical view of feudal lordship was of political advantage to themselves. However, these supporters were frightened away when in 1379 he attacked the dogma of transsubstantiation. Furthermore, although Wycliffism had little direct influence on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, this revolutionary outbreak certainly made men of position and wealth even less favorably disposed toward the movement and it was no chance that the first stern measures against the heretics were taken during the next year. However, Wycliffism continued after this to find support among the lower clergy and the laity, while Oxford University, where Wyclif had been the leading scholastic doctor, remained a center for his teaching until 1407 when it was suppressed there by Archbishop Arundel of Canterbury. Nevertheless, Wycliffism survived at Oxford and in other parts of England throughout the fifteenth century and until the Reformation.[8] Thus in 1491, at the end of Colet's period of study at Oxford, Bishop Russell of Lincoln, the University's diocesan, ordered the reissue of the Sacramentale of Thomas Netter of Walden, a work which had been written specifically to counteract Wycliffite teachings.[9] But following the accession of Henry IV in 1399, persecution of the new heresy became severe enough to turn the Lollards into despairing revolutionaries; and almost all members of the upper ranks of society deserted the movement. The suppression of Sir John Oldcastle's revolt by his son, the rigidly orthodox Henry V, ended Wycliffism as a powerful movement in English life. However Lollardy continued to have an important effect upon the attitudes of the English clergy. The widespread fear among the upper clergy of a Wycliffite revival helps explain the rigid but unenthusiastic orthodox papalism which characterised the attitude of the English church to the Conciliar movement from the Council of Siena in 1423 until the Henrician Reformation. This rigid and conservative orthodoxy, always on the lookout for heresy, became characteristic of the ruling clerics at Oxford during the fifteenth century and played an important role in the decline of original scholastic thought at the University. The very fact that Lollardy became more and more identified with the lower clergy and the laity as the fifteenth century progressed created a reactionary attitude among the basically orthodox upper clergy who ran the _ecclesia_ _Anglicana_ and the universities.

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[8] Cf. J. A. F. Thomson, The Later Lollards 1414-1520 (Oxford, 1965), passim and note 9 below.

[9] H. Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, III, p. 272 and note 1; D. Knowles, Religious Orders in England, II, pp. 145-48, 199, 356.

Therefore when Lollardy revived or perhaps simply became once again evident with the ending of the civil wars in 1485, there soon followed new cases of heresy burnings at the command of the diocesan bishops during the last decade of the fifteenth and first two decades of the sixteenth century. It was during such an anti-Lollard drive in 1511 that Archbishop Warham of Canterbury, who had already burned a few heretics in his own diocese, asked Colet to preach the opening sermon at the Canterbury Convocation on this subject of heresy. The result was Colet's celebrated Convocation Sermon on the more basic subject of ecclesiastical reformation of February 6, 1511/1512. It was probably partially as a result of this sermon that Colet, who had preached in this sermon that the evil morals of the clergy were a greater heresy than the false doctrine of the laity, was himself charged with heresy by his diocesan Bishop Fitzjames of London in 1513. According to the independent testimonies of William Tyndale in 1528 and Hugh Latimer in 1550, Colet would have been burnt on this occasion had he not been saved by the intervention of his friend Archbishop Warham of Canterbury.[10] Since Erasmus indicates that Colet had read Wyclif's works, and since Fitzjames' behavior in the Hunne Affair showed that he had an almost psychotic obsession with Lollardy if he was not actually involved in Hunne's murder, we believe that a suspicion of Lollardy in Colet lay behind the official charges against him which Erasmus describes in his Life.[11] For among these articles was the charge that Colet had used the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed in English in his preaching, while the use of the English language in the liturgy was considered by the conservative clergy to be a sure sign of Lollard heresy. In a recent book Arthur Ogle has argued that Fitzjames himself was behind the murder of Richard Hunne, which seems unquestionably to have been carried out at the behest of Horsey, the Bishop's chancellor and the vicar-general of his diocese. The reason for this seems to have been that Hunne was supposed to have owned a Lollard Bible, and, more importantly, had charged members of the London clergy with violating the Statute of Praemunire at the secular court of the King's Bench.[12]

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10. Cf. Lupton, Life of Colet, pp. 202-204.

11. See Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 523-24, lines 529-556.

12. A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollards' Tower (Oxford, 1949), pp. 18-161.

A. F. Pollard and Ogle have also shown that the still mysterious "Hunne case" lay behind the attack upon the clergy by the House of Commons in the Parliaments of 1515-16 and 1529-35 and played an important role in Parliament's passing the acts which gave statutory support to Henry VIII's breach with Rome.[13]

The continuation of Lollardy as a largely underground movement throughout the fifteenth century is therefore important for understanding the widening split between the clergy and laity of England during this period. It is also important for a correct understanding of the difficult question of assessing Colet's exact attitudes to Lollardy and orthodoxy respectively and also the apparently intentional lack of clear emphasis in his statements concerning the papal authority in the Church. But before reaching our final conclusions concerning Colet's role as a humanist reformer and the effectiveness of his program for ecclesiastical reform, we will first need to understand the relations of the English clergy with both the Crown and the papacy during the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. We will need also to examine the organizational structure of the English Church during this period.

The English Church, the Crown, and the Papacy during the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries.

In order to understand the attitudes of the English clergy toward the Crown and the papacy during this period, which have puzzled more than one writer, it is important to realize the significance of the withdrawal of England from European affairs during the period of the defeat in France and the civil wars, as well as the real interests of both the English nation and the national Church. By the early part of the fifteenth century, especially after the victorious campaign in France by Henry V culminating in his coronation as King of France in 1420, national feeling in England was probably stronger than that of any other part of Europe. We have already alluded to the violently anti-French attitude of Adam of Easton and his xenophobia was by no means an isolated instance. When English monastic chroniclers of this period discussed foreigners it was generally in emotionally insular terms. During the fourteenth century Parliament spoke in official documents about "la pecherouse cité d'Avenon [Avignon] ", while the chroniclers at St. Albans' monastery called the Picards "the falsest kind of men" and the Scots (the allies of the French) "the enemies of the human race.[14] It was for this same reason that by about 1400 English had definitely begun to replace French as the language of the court and the nobility and in official documents. This tendency was given great impetus by Henry V's victory over the French at Agincourt in 1415 when the international Council of Constance was meeting. Similarly England supported the Roman line of popes during the Great Schism in conscious opposition to the support of the Avignon line by the French. The support in both cases was largely political, although neither nation would admit this fact. It was furthermore no chance that it was the English who first suggested that the Council of Constance should vote by "nations", while Henry V did not make any effort to hide his intention of using the General Council to gain diplomatic advantages over "noster adversarius de Francia."[15] The English also, under the leadership of Bishop (later Cardinal) Henry Beaufort, the King's uncle, played a major role in arranging the election of Martin V and the end of the Schism.

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[13] Cf. A. F. Pollard, Wolsey (London, 1929), pp. 31-42, 249, 330, 349, 351; Ogle, op. cit., pp. 173-381. See also chapter 7 above.

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[14] Cf. Du Boulay, _op_. _cit_., p. 198.

The support of the English Church and State for the Roman line of popes from the beginning of the Schism in 1378 continued after Martin's election in 1417 throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. However, this support was originally and continued to be largely political, as was all European ecclesiastical policy during this period. This support should therefore not be taken to mean that there was in England any deep understanding or sympathy for the problems of the papacy in the era following the healing of the Schism. The disputes between England and the papacy had had a long history and were never really resolved at the time of Henry VIII's breach with Rome. These traditional disputes, together with purely national considerations, are central to understanding the

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[15] E. F. Jacob, Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, pp. 49, 51.

Anglo-papal relations of the period as seen from the English viewpoint. All the major issues between the two were primarily financial and jurisdictional. And since from the time of the Great Schism the main purpose of normal day to day papal jurisdiction over the *ecclesia Anglicana* was to augment the reduced papal income and to protect and enlarge all possible sources of revenue, the fundamental issue was in fact the financial one. The result of the rising cost of living and the increasing centralization of all monarchies during the later Middle Ages was that the popes were having grave difficulties in financing the far-flung government of the *ecclesia Universalis* at just the time when the national monarchies were themselves requiring ever more money to pay for their own developing governments. It was for this reason that the Avignon popes had been almost forced to arrange for the development of an elaborate machinery for tax collection, which inevitably led to abuses and the widespread call for the reform of the papal Curia throughout the Universal Church.

This widespread call for ecclesiastical reform had after 1378 become merged with the primarily Gallican conciliar movement and would become a dominant issue at the Council of Constance. Throughout the Great Schism, the position of the English Church had been that a reformatory General Council should be called by the Roman pope. This seems also to have been the dominant position of reform-minded English clergy throughout the following century, and it was *also* the position of Colet.

The organization into five *nationes* by the Council of Constance shows clearly that by 1414 the various national Churches, like the national States, were acquiring a continually growing importance vis-à-vis the Catholic or Universal idea of the Church. When the French attacked the English at Constance as being too small a people to be considered a nation that could represent one fifth of Christendom, their reply shows the strength of the national feeling of the English clergy as well as the laity at this time. According to the English delegates

> . . . whether a nation be understood as a people marked off from others by blood relationship and the habit of unity, or by peculiarity of language (the surest and most positive sign and essence of a nation in both divine and human law). . . or if it be understood, as it should be, as a territory equal to that of the French nation, England is a real nation.[16]

After the ending of the Schism in 1417 England made a concordat with Martin V during the next year. The major concession in this concordat was the wider authority which was granted by Martin to the native bishops in the ecclesia Anglicana. Certain reforms for the English Church were also agreed upon. The clergy were not to be given permission in future to hold a plurality of benefices with the exception of "noble persons and men of very good birth," -- a reminder of the importance of social distinctions

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16. Cited by Du Boulay, op. cit., p. 211.

among the clergy in the later Middle Ages. This was part of an attempted reform to improve the cure of souls in the parishes which had especially suffered from the pluralism which had become endemic during the Schism because of the ease with which dispensations from the Canon Law could be acquired at that time for a financial consideration. For the same reason the English Concordat stated that papal dispensations were annulled in the case of men who had obtained benefices during the Schism with exemption from the necessity of proceeding to major orders. The reformatory points granted by Martin V were in fact on the whole sound ones.[17]

But though the text of this Concordat was copied and distributed freely in England after 1418 as a "perpetual reminder", it nevertheless quickly fell into oblivion. In England itself the blame for this failure of reform must probably be placed where Colet was to place it a hundred years later, that is upon the bishops of the English Church who gained in power by this agreement but who with a few exceptions never measured up to their spiritual responsibilities. This mutual failure of England and Rome to bring about reform must once again be understood in political terms. The Council of Constance had taken place at the height of England's military success in France under Henry V and of his alliance with the Emperor Sigismund, who had convoked the great Council. But within

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17. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

a generation this situation had been completely reversed. When Henry V died of camp fever in 1422 just two years after he had been crowned King of France as well as England, he was succeeded by his son Henry VI , who was still an infant and who grew up to be an incompetent King. The English now began to be defeated by a resurgent France. The desertion to the French of Burgundy in 1435 led to their being driven out of France except Calais by 1453. At the same time a series of civil wars began which lasted off and on until the accession of Henry VII in 1485 and the beginning of the strong Tudor monarchy.

These civil wars of the Roses gave a very bad and also a misleading impression of England to those outside the country including the papacy. The nation seemed to have lost its political importance in European affairs so that in this age of ecclesiastical politics when the popes were trying desperately to regain their old position of authority in Christendom by using their spiritual office to make deals with the European powers England seemed relatively unimportant to Rome in spite of its consistent though rather unenthusiastic loyalty to the Roman See. But it is now clear that England was neither a poor nor a weak nation during the fifteenth century. She was in fact undergoing a process of important social and political change which was transforming her into the insular power of considerable self-sufficiency which would emerge during the sixteenth century. But this was not realized at the time by the papacy. This is shown by the fact that the great works on the papacy by Von Pastor and Mandell Creighton and the first volume of Jedin's History of the Council of Trent make almost no references at all to England. During this period Anglo-papal relations were governed largely by a mutual lack of understanding in a changing world. The relations between the two were cemented primarily by their mutual hostility to the French.[18]

This fact explains England's attitude to the conciliar movement both during and after the Council of Constance. All the European nations had used the Council to forward their diplomatic interests and Henry V had used the English delegation to a large degree as an instrument against the French. For Henry the English representatives at Constance did not only represent the ecclesia Anglicana: they represented the entire regnum Angliae, that is, the whole nation, both Church and State. This primarily political attitude to the General Councils and ecclesiastical reform characterized all the European powers including the papacy from the time of the conciliar movement until the outbreak of the Reformation, and was perhaps the most pertinent factor in the failure to bring about a genuine and widespread reform of the Church during this period.

Reasons of state are thus the best explanation of the obstructive and even wrecking tactics used by the English delegates to the Council of Siena in favor of Pope Martin V.

If Noel Valois'. interpretation is correct, the English representatives at Siena were acting under the strict direction of

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[18] Ibid., pp. 213, 217.

John, Duke of Bedford, the regent of English France, who was doing his best following the death of his brother Henry V to gain from the papacy a favorable ecclesiastical settlement in the conquered French provinces. Bedford's policy seems to have been to get into his own hands as large a power over the appointment to French benefices as he could. To do this he had to humor Martin V, hoping to dissuade him from attacking the Statute of Provisors. Both the English delegation and the representatives from the new Anglo-Burgundian University of Paris were instructed to support the Pope's distant and unfriendly attitude toward the Council and to use their best efforts to veto any of the more radical proposals for ecclesiastical reform along the lines of the conciliar theory. This view explains the complete volte face of the English at Siena from their reformatory efforts at the Council of Constance.[19]

This position developed into what now became the characteristic policy of government and Church toward the conciliar movement. This manifested itself even more clearly at the Council of Basel (1431-1499). Two factors in particular affected the English attitude toward this Council. The first of these was the traditional English pro-Roman papalism. For when Eugenius IV issued his bill of dissolution and transference to Ferrara on December 18, both Henry VI and the Convocation of Canterbury, the most important synod of the ecclesia Anglicana, lessened their support of the Council of Basel. But the second and more important factor in the English withdrawal from Basel was the national and political one. The originally English idea at Constance of voting by nations had given the small English nation a disproportionately large voice for its size at the Council; but at Basel a new voting procedure was introduced which reduced the influence of the small English delegation almost to nothing. However, it was also true that this delegation went to Basel at the behest of a King and Canterbury Convocation. who took a very high view of the papal office. After 1431 Convocation maintained that a General Council could not function against the wish of the Pope, while Henry VI made objections to attacks "by the sheep on the shepherd."[20] William Lyndwood, the leading English canonist of the day, whose Provinciale (1430) supports the high papalist position in canon law, was one of the delegates from the English Church to Basel.[21] He argued there that since every nation was developing its own special kind of ecclesiastical reform and since Henry VI was King of France as well as of England, the voting procedure should be by nations as before. His arguments had no effect, but they show that Lyndwood the papalist canon lawyer was also very much concerned about the national rights of the English King and Church at the Council. F. W. Maitland was surprised that in the Provinciale, which was written on the eve of the Council of Basel, Lyndwood says nothing at all about previous General Councils, the Great Schism, D'Ailly, Gerson, or even Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury who had led the English delegation and been its leading proponent of reform at Constance. His only references to current events in the work are that at the command of Eugenius IV Cardinal Beaufort is leading a crusade against the Lollards (sic) of Bohemia and that the heretic Wyclif's bones have recently been disinterred at Lutterworth.[22] Lyndwood also maintains in this work that the Pope is above the General Council, and that it can only be convoked by him. However, these facts are not surprising when we realize that the fierce attacks on the Hussites by the English delegations at both Constance and Basel are explained by the strong desire to prove its orthodoxy within the Catholic Church by a nation which had a European reputation for harboring the virulent Wycliffite heresy. There was also no reason for the papalist Englishman Lyndwood to mention in his textbook of Canon Law the conciliar theories of the Frenchmen D'Ailly and Gerson; while national ecclesiastical and diplomatic policy had shifted drastically since the days of Hallam.

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[19] N. Valois, Pragmatique sanction de Bourges, pp. xxi-xxvii; E. F. Jacob, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

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[20] Cf. Du Boulay, p. 214.

[21] Ibid., loc. cit.; F. W. Maitland, Roman Canon Law in the Church of England (London, 1898), p. 4.

We will therefore conclude this section by noting that England's support for the papacy during the conciliar period and after was of the same general type as her support for the Roman line of popes since the beginning of the Great Schism after the brief period of support for the Pisan line between 1409 and the opening of Constance in 1414. This was a policy dictated by political interest combined with a lukewarm doctrinal recognition for the Roman papacy which probably owed a good deal to the national trait of conservatism. Another very important reason was that the English Crown and Church had already gained many important concessions from the papacy during the Avignon period of the fourteenth century and therefore did not have to fight for these national interests during the next century as did the governments of France, Germany, and Spain. The royal control over the *ecclesia Anglicana* had been strengthened during the period of the Avignon papacy and this control had been increased still further by the papal weakness during the Schism, when the Roman popes had desperately needed English support against the Avignon line.

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[22] Cf. Maitland, op. cit., p. 14.

Although Henry V was severely orthodox in his Catholic doctrine, he had vigorously maintained the royal authority *vis-à-vis* the papacy following the election of Martin V. in 1417. Thus when in this same year Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the King's uncle and his wealthiest subject, had persuaded Martin to grant him a cardinalate, Henry successfully forced Beaufort to resign his red hat under the threat of being deprived of the See of Winchester and all his other possessions under the Great Statute of *Praemunire*. And as the fifteenth century progressed the common lawyers continually widened their interpretation of the scope of this statute, so that it gradually came to be used to strike at any appeal to the Roman See which could in any way be held to diminish the royal prerogative and jurisdiction. They had already begun to argue by the beginning of the century that the ecclesiastical authority deriving from Rome was in its very nature un-English and "foreign," and incompatible with Richard II's Statute of Praemunire. By 1447 the Convocation of Canterbury had found it necessary to protest strongly against this common law interpretation as fatal to all ecclesiastical jurisdiction; but the controversy was then broken off temporarily by the civil wars and the protection which the Yorkist kings gave to the Church. Thus on November 2, 1462 Edward IV, who appears to have been the most papally-minded of all English Kings with the exception of Henry III, granted the Church in England a remarkable "charter of liberties" in which he dispensed with Richard II's Statute of Praemunire and asserted for himself and his heirs the fullest immunity for the clergy from the secular jurisdiction.[23] But the Yorkist line came to an end with the death of Richard III in 1485, and the controversy was still unresolved when it became the basis of the Hunne case in 1512-16. These interpretations of Praemunire in common law foreshadowed Wolsey's threat to use it against Warham, and finally Henry VIII's own use of it to force first the submission of Wolsey and finally that of the entire English clergy.

The Nationalizing of the English Church during the Fifteenth Century

Pope Martin V had tried every means at his disposal to gain the revocation of these obnoxious Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, but to no avail. Thus in 1426 he sent Giuliano Cesarini to

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[23] Cf. D. Wilkins, Concilia, III, pp. 555-56, 583-85; and Pollard, Wolsey, p. 167.

England to get them repealed, but Parliament refused to act. In the next year he actually suspended Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury from his powers as papal legatus natus until he had gone in person before the King and council to beg them to do away with the statute of Provisors. Chichele seems to have done this with tears; but Parliament, which had passed the statute, still would not repeal it. Eugenius IV continued this policy of attempted revocation but with the same lack of success as his predecessor, despite the pro-papal piety of the weak Henry VI. For the rest of the century the papacy seems to have realized that it was useless to struggle against the claims of the English Crown, since it was backed by Parliament in this matter. Bishops were by now almost always royal nominees and servants and by the latter part of the century papal consent to the provision of the King's nominee came to be taken for granted. Since the role of the cathedral chapter in episcopal elections had long since become an unimportant formality, the bishops of the ecclesia Anglicana were now in fact chosen by the Crown with the formal assent of the Pope. Prelates were for this reason generally chosen for their administrative and diplomatic talents rather than for their piety, zeal, and learning, as in the earlier medieval ideal. Some of these men tried to look after their dioceses conscientiously; but because of the centralizing process of the monarchy and their increasing duties as royal servants the absence of bishops from their Sees became more and more frequent and their residence in London as royal servants more permanent.[24]

Because of this at about the middle of the fifteenth century the papacy shifted to a policy of appointing an important English bishop upon whom Rome thought she could rely and who had a good rapport with both Crown and Church, as Cardinal legate with authority to look after papal interests in England.

The Change in the Nature of the Papacy during the Fifteenth Century

Meanwhile, by about the middle of the fifteenth century an important change was taking place in the papacy itself. The fourteenth century papacy had been a primarily French organization, but of the nine popes who ruled from 1417 to 1503 all except the two Spanish Borgias Calixtus III and Alexander VI were Italians. Furthermore, all these popes had been elected in fairly small consistories heavily weighted with Italians drawn from a small number of noble families preoccupied with Italian politics and competing against one another in their secular ambitions. The net result, given the politics of fifteenth century Italy, and the increasing worldliness of the period, was that a small number of rich Latin families came more and more to look upon the papacy as merely another Italian princedom with spiritual powers attached which were useful for political reasons. They not surprisingly gave very little thought to the remote island kingdom which had retired into its own form of isolation during the Wars of the Roses.

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[24] Cf. Myers, op. cit., pp. 154-57; and my paper "John Colet and the Pseudo-Dionysius: English Mystical Theology and Humanistic Reform on the Eve of the Reformation," pp. 22-27.

Because of the cost of governing the Universal Church and the luxury in which the papal court was determined to live, the main interest of the papacy in England remained that of a possible source for special taxation. Recent work done on the financial relations of England and the papacy has shown that this financial interest runs as a continuous thread throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth. This relationship does however stress two factors of prime importance for understanding the attitude of the English Church during the time of Colet. These were the residual but abiding sense of papal authority among the English clergy, and the growing sense of royal authority among all Englishmen including the clergy.[25] Thus popes asked for taxes on English clerical incomes at least fifteen times during the fifteenth century but these requests were almost all unsuccessful. When Martin V, for instance, imposed a tax of a tenth on the whole English clergy, the clergy complained that it was "difficult and unusual." However, the Archbishop of Canterbury wanted them to make a reply that would please the pope and a grant was finally agreed upon; however only on condition that no offence was thereby done to the king. By the second half of the fifteenth century lengthy and conciliatory excuses had become the usual response of the English clergy to the papal demands. In 1464 Edward IV told the clergy that he thought they should grant some money to help the papal crusade planned by Pius II against the advancing Ottoman Turks, who had recently conquered Constantinople in 1453. But Edward thought that it would be a dangerous precedent if the pope were allowed to levy money from the English clergy directly. Therefore he suggested that the clergy be summoned by the bishop in their separate dioceses to vote money and that this money should be granted in the first instance to himself and he would forward it to Rome. This suggestion was accepted by Archbishop Bourchier of Canterbury and his letter to the diocesan bishops retailed the King's idea. This letter gives a revealing view of the attitude of the English Church to the King and to Rome during the reign of Edward IV. Bourchier wrote that since the pope was giving a courageous lead to Christendom he deserved thanks and consideration, especially since he had spared England some of the demands which he had made on the other realms. Furthermore, such a demand could not lawfully or reasonably be disobeyed. But since the precedent was perilous, the best solution was "devolve the excuse" upon the King. The clergy could then offer less money than the pope asked for and grant it to the King, who would offer it to the pope on behalf of the English Church. In this way the English clergy would be spared both large expenses and also the imputation of disobedience to the pope. It was hoped that the pope would be satisfied, especially if the King sent an honourable ambassador to explain the situation to him in person.

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[25] Cf. W. E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327-1534 (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); Du Boulay, op. cit., pp. 217-18.

But in 1481 another papal demand for money at an inconvenient moment received less courteous treatment. It was given to a committee of the Canterbury Convocation in April and then discussed with lessening interest until November, when the chairman of the committee reported that sickness and death had so depleted the ranks of the committee that they could not fulfill their duties. The matter was then referred to the next Convocation where it was finally dropped. These financial negotiations throw the clearest light we are able to gain on the relations of the English clergy with the papacy at this time. What we find is a passive recognition of the pope's leadership in Christendom and the _ecclesia Catholica_, a faint acknowledgement of his legal right to obedience, a dislike of his continued interest in taxation, and above all, the effective dominance of the _ecclesia Anglicana_ by the King who was near at hand, as opposed to the pope who was far away and preoccupied with his own affairs.[26]

The Reign of Henry VII 1485-1509

A change occurred after 1485 when the Wars of the Roses ended with the Battle of Bosworth and Henry VII began to establish the strong Tudor monarchy. Henry also brought England back into contact with Europe in her most important role since the time of Henry V, and this necessarily also meant a more ostentatious political relationship with the papacy. Since he was a member of a new dynasty with a rather shaky claim to his throne, Henry VII looked to the papacy for political and moral support. The popes on their side valued the friendship of a king who counted for something in diplomacy and above all might be persuaded to play a part in keeping the French out of Italy. Public relations between the King and the popes were courteous and even elaborately friendly since both could make use of the other. Consequently, not long after Bosworth Innocent VIII provided the dispensation for Henry's marriage with Elizabeth of York "eldest daughter and undoubted heiress of Edward IV" and documents were sent declaring that Henry's children by Elizabeth, or any other lawful wife, would be legitimate. The remembrance of the ease with which these documents were obtained was almost certainly extremely annoying to Henry VIII when he was trying to get papal approval for the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. An accord was soon established between Pope Innocent, the King, and Henry's close adviser Archbishop Morton of Canterbury, who was made Cardinal legate for England in accordance with the new papal policy for the national Churches. Morton, who was also Lord Chancellor of the realm, developed a policy of using Rome to support his metropolitan jurisdiction as Primate of All England. He obtained papal bulls confirming his right to hear appeals from the suffragan bishops of England and Wales and supporting the ancient claim of the Archbishops of Canterbury to prove the wills of rich people all over the province.

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[26] Cf. Du Boulay, pp. 218-219.

Both King and Pope supported the power of the Archbishop to visit and correct religious houses which were within the province but outside the diocese of Canterbury. Morton and Henry VII agreed about the necessity of the centralized maintenance of law and order among clergy as well as laity, which was on everybody's minds after the rampant lawlessness which had been characteristic of the period of the civil wars. Thus the legal privileges in canon law protecting clerics accused of crimes were diminished. By the end of his reign in 1509 Henry VII had been granted as special tokens of favor both the Cap and Sword and the Golden Rose from Julius II. Furthermore, throughout his reign Henry had no difficulty getting the men he wanted as bishops provided by the pope according to due canonical order. The relationship between Henry VII and the papacy was in fact a cozy political and diplomatic one.

This relationship was developed by means of diplomatic interchanges, making use of the humanistic clergy as ambassadors. Henry VII took over the English Hospice in Rome, and what had formerly been a self-supporting lodging for English pilgrims became for a time part of the royal administration and housed men of rank. John Colet and his father, Sir Henry, who was a close supporter of the king, stayed there in April, 1493; although the precise reason for their doing so is not known. But because of Colet's contact in Rome with Henry VII's Grand Almoner, ambassador, and keen supporter Christopher Urswick, and the fact that he registered in the English Hospice, it is possible that this stay in Rome was related in some way to his father's relationship with the King.[27]

The Ecclesia Anglicana at the Time of Colet's Convocation Sermon on Ecclesiastical Reformation.

Our general examination of the relations between England and the papacy from the Great Schism until the time of Colet thus shows that although there was a strong undercurrent of Lollardy which had never been and probably could not be suppressed, together with widespread anticlericalism among the laity, there was no antipapalism in the important posts of State and Church. In fact England seems to have been one of the most papalist lands in Europe at this time. The reason for this is clear. The events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had strengthened the position of the Crown to the point where there was no need to be antipapal. The attitude to the papacy was certainly more cordial during the reigns of Henry VII and the early part of that of Henry VIII than it had been in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Except among the Lollards, who were now condemned as heretics if caught, the papal authority and the canon law were accepted in spiritual matters by the English laity as well as the clergy, although with an increasingly bad grace in matters which affected their pockets. But unfortunately, given the state of the late medieval papacy, this was precisely the main interest which the papacy had in England at this time. The financial needs of the papacy were certainly great and sometimes even desperate in the fifteenth century, but its method of trying to raise money by the continual threat of spiritual censure naturally seemed repulsive since the real power of the papal office at all times has been as a symbol of spiritual unity and leadership in the Christian Church. In an effort to sum up the English attitude toward the papacy at the beginning of the sixteenth century before the rise of Wolsey, we may say that it was doctrinally orthodox but strongly dependent upon the attitude of the King, whose power over his subjects in this age was enormous once the Wars of the Roses were over and the independence of the feudal nobility had been broken.

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[27] Cf. W. K. Ferguson "An Unpublished Letter of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's," American Historical Review, 39 (1934), pp. 696-699.

The growing nationalism of the English during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries not only steadily increased the royal authority but it also tended to make the *ecclesia Anglicana* more separate from the *societas Christiana* in a period when England was withdrawing from European affairs during the fifteenth century. Since the papacy granted greater powers to the English bishops after the Great Schism and *ecclesia Anglicana* was, like the *regnum Angliae*, becoming detached from Europe, Church reform would necessarily have to come from the bishops led by the king since it had become obvious by the late fifteenth century that very little could be expected in this regard from a papacy which refused to reform itself. But the increasing secularization of European society in the late Middle Ages had also led to an almost total "politicalization" of the whole Church for which the princes and the papacy as the recognized temporal and spiritual powers in Christendom were both culpable.[28] Another way of looking at this is to say that the traditional medieval outlook on the Church and society had become old-fashioned, so that if there were no renewal from the top the situation was ripe for revolutionary change. Ever since the time of William the Conqueror the English kings had employed the upper English clergy as royal servants. By the late fifteenth century, when the popes had come to accept the Crown's nominations to the important bishoprics practically without question,this system had developed an episcopate which appears to have been unwilling for the most part to make much progress in reforming the national Church despite often good intentions in individual cases. This explains the great trust which was at first put in Wolsey as a Church reformer after he had become Cardinal and *legatus a latere* in 1518 as well as Lord Chancellor of England and the leading minister of the young King Henry VIII. At last it seemed that a churchman had appeared who had the powerful support of both the King and the papacy and so had the necessary authority to reform the whole English Church from the top as papal legate with delegated papal powers. Wolsey certainly did make some movements towards reform

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28. Throughout the Middle Ages the papacy had been necessarily involved in politics ever since the enunciation of the theory of the two swords by Pope Gelasius I at the end of the fifth century. Cf. W. Ullmann, *Growth of Papal Monarchy*, p. 15f. But by the latter half of the fifteenth century the popes were primarily involved in politics as Italian princes, rather than because they felt they had to control temporal matters for the good of the Church.

especially during the early years of his power, but he was primarily involved in foreign policy as Henry VIII's prime minister, and despite his enormous energy he was largely involved in questions of the state rather than those of the Church. Furthermore, his unfortunate love of luxury and power finally came to be ends in themselves so that by the 1520's he had alienated both the leading churchmen and the leading lay counselors or the King since he had usurped the authority of both groups. Since he had become in practice vice-pope for England and had promised Henry VIII that he could arrange at Rome the annulment of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon, Wolsey's fall was to prove the final undoing of the papal authority in England; since not long after his fall in 1529 his former servant Thomas Cromwell gradually emerged as the king's leading counselor and advocated the royal policy of breaking both the jurisdiction of Rome and the independent power of the English spirituality.[29]

In retrospect, therefore, it seems that Wolsey had the last chance to reform the ills of the English church along traditional Catholic lines; at least until the reign of Mary whose policy was in any case to make this impossible once and for all. Reforming churchmen such as Bishop Fox of Winchester and John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, put their trust in Wolsey as a reformer after he received his first commission as special legate from the pope. But his failure to reform the Church effectively led directly to the Henrician schism. Wolsey was in fact the extreme example of the cleric as royal servant.[30]

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[29] Cf. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 217f.

The Episcopacy and Colet's Call for Reformation

Because of the fifteenth century developments whereby the bishops were becoming practically royal nominees while the papacy was losing most of its interest in England except the financial one, we can see in retrospect that Colet's call for a reformation of the Church led by the bishops in his Convocation sermon of 1511/12 was doomed to failure without royal support. Colet however was an idealist who hoped to return to the traditions of an earlier day apparently without having taken fully into account the great changes which had taken place in society. He complains bitterly in his shorter commentary on *Romans*, which seems to have been written at about this same time, that the bishops who are called in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* pontiffs and heads of the Church, are now appointed under the most secular conditions by Kings who according to the canon law have no rights in episcopal appointments. In asking the English prelates to lead the reformation of the Church from the top of the national hierarchy he was asking for something which was long overdue, but, as he himself recognized, extremely unlikely.[31] In fact, the last chance for such a reformation along traditional Catholic lines would come with the granting of the special powers of a legatus a latere to Cardinal Wolsey for this purpose on May 17, 1518. Wolsey, who had become by this time Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor and effectual prime minister for the State as well as having plenary legatine authority over the English Church, seems to have been interested in a certain type of reformation. However, there is no question that he wheedled the special legatine powers from Leo X for the purpose of reformation, to a large degree because of his jealousy of Archbishop Warham of Canterbury, and his greed for ever greater and wider powers.

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[30] Cf. Myers, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157; P. Hughes, *The Reformation in England*; 3 vols., (London, 1952), I, pp. 3-89.

But that Wolsey's interest in reformation in the later part of 1518 and early 1519 was taken seriously at the time is shown by documents written by contemporary reform-minded clergy. The first of these which we will cite are the revised statutes for St. Paul's Cathedral, which Colet himself "exhibited" to Wolsey on September 1, 1518, about a year before his death. They are addressed to Wolsey as "Lord Cardinal of York and Apostolic Legate a latere"for "the reformation of the state of the Residentiary Canons in the Church of St. Paul."[32] Sometime in 1519 Wolsey issued new statutes for the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral based on those submitted to him by Colet. However, although he issued them both as Lord Chancellor and papal legate de latere these statutes appear never to have been put into effect. For in a manuscript in the St. Paul's Cathedral library which dates from the later sixteenth century a list of twelve reasons is given why the "Statuta Woolsey" did not stand in Canon Law. First of all, Colet is said to have submitted his statutes to the Cardinal when he was "out with the Chapter" so that as Dean he did not get the Chapter's approval for the submission. Other reasons given for their invalidation are that they were "made by a Straunger [i.e., Wolsey] , not as the Pope's Legat but by compromise, the Bishop of London pretermitted; who, in all other Statutes, is chiefly respected" and that they were "never sealed . . . but have onely the Cardinal's hand to them."[33] Nevertheless these documents make plain that Colet attempted to get Cardinal Wolsey to use his special legatine authority from the pope to enforce the reformation of the unruly chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral.

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[31] Cf. Colet, In Eccl. Hier., c. 5.3, pp. 123-124: "Therefore I will here express my abhorrence of that detestable custom which has now been developing for a long time in the Church and is now so deep-rooted as almost to destroy the Church, whereby temporal princes . . . calling themselves Christians are open enemies . . . of God, blasphemers of Christ and over-throwers of his Church. These . . . with proud and rash minds, not in consecrated . . . places, but in their own rooms and at banquets appoint bishops to rule Christ's Church, who are ignorant of everything sacred, and skilled in everything which is profane. These are the men to whom the princes have already shamelessly sold their bishoprics. O wicked generation! . . . O, madness of princes . . ."

The second document which shows the seriousness and high expectation with which at least one important English bishop looked forward to Wolsey's legatine reformation of the English Church is the letter written to him by Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester, on January 2, 1519. This letter is evidently Fox's reply to Wolsey's general letter to all the bishops of late December 1519, in which he summoned them to a conference on reform of the Church in England to be held at Westminster in Lent 1519.[34]

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[32] W. Sparrow Simpson, ed., Registrum Statutorum et Consuetudinum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Sancti Pauli Londinensis (London, 1873), pp. 237-48.

[33] Ibid., pp. 418-419.

We will quote at length from Fox's reply, since it makes clear that he is genuinely looking forward to a conservative reformation of the English Church under the leadership of Wolsey as special papal Legate at the top of the English ecclesiastical hierarchy. The type of reformation he expects from Wolsey is very similar to that proposed seven years earlier by Colet in his Convocation Sermon of 1511/1512. Fox writes Wolsey

> Great was the contentment and joy, most reverend Father, which I received from your recent letter which tells me that your Grace is determined to reform the whole body of the clergy, and that you have . . . fixed a day on which this work will begin.. . . I have truly longed for this day, just as Simeon in the Gospel longed to see the Messiah . . . and in reading your . . . letter I see before me a more complete and whole reformation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the English people than I . . . ever hoped to see completed, or even as much as attempted, in this day and age. As part of my duty, in fact, I myself attempted to carry out within the limits of my own small jurisdiction this same design which your Grace will soon bring about for both the provinces of this realm. For

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[34] See P. S. Allen, ed., Letters of Richard Fox 1486-1527 (Oxford, 1929), pp. 114-117.

> three years this great matter was the subject of all my studies, labours, watchings and work, until I realized what had up until that time eluded me; namely that everything regarding the ancient integrity of the clergy, especially to the monastic state, is either perverted by dispensations and corruptions or has become obsolete and depraved because of the evil of our times . . . As papal legate you have already settled the differences between Christian princes and have made peace; and now you are determined to employ your power in reforming and settling the condition and discipline of the Church. In doing this you will gain true and immortal honour from God and from posterity and will leave a name as far superior to any other papal legate to England. . . . as the clergy are more holy . . . than the laity . . . You will restore the clergy and the religious orders of England to dignity and integrity and you will enact canon laws . . . for their safety and stability . . . [35]

Fox then goes to say that Wolsey's coming reformation of the clergy through his legatine power will halt the present attacks against them by the laity, including the King and the nobility. He obviously refers here to the outburst of hatred against the clergy which had been caused by the Hunne affair and the strong anti-clericalism of the Parliament of 1515-16. He continues

> So far as I can see, this reformation of the clergy and the religious orders will reduce to such a large degree the calumnies of the laity, and. . . will so reconcile our sovereign Lord the King and the nobility toward us, that this

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[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.

> will be the most acceptable of all possible
> sacrifices to God. Consequently I intend to
> devote the rest of my life to furthering
> it . . . Meanwhile so long as I live I will
> constantly pray in my sacrifices [of the Mass]
> that our good God will protect your Grace
> and further all your projects both happily
> and prosperously.[36]

Fox in this letter takes quite seriously Wolsey's plans for the reformation of the English clergy. In fact Wolsey's expression of intention to bring about the long awaited reform won commendations from other reform-minded bishops than Fox, and also from Erasmus and Thomas More. But there is no evidence that Wolsey, any more than Fox, Colet, or More wanted any doctrinal change. His plan for reformation, so far as we can reconstruct it, was as follows. He would use his extraordinary legatine authority from the pope to carry out the reformation of the clerical hierarchy. Like Colet and Fox he expected that this reform of the spirituality would lead to an end to anticlericalism and further reform in the attitude of the lower lay "estate." Judging from the constitutions which Wolsey laid down for his province of York in 1518, his scheme for reformation was along the following conservative lines which agree with Colet's views stated in the Convocation Sermon, and indeed with the ideas of all the English Catholic humanist reformers. Firstly, he would hold a general visitation of both the secular clergy and the monasteries by his legatine authority. The purpose of this was to restore sound discipline and morals and to enforce the fulfilment of duties. Secondly, like Colet and Erasmus, he would provide better education for the clergy in colleges and universities on the view that improvement in clerical education would lead to a better and more moral clergy. A third point, after Luther's final condemnation for heresy in 1521, was to guard England against the "new learning" (i.e., Lutheranism) by means of an improvement in education, to which his ambitious foundation of Cardinal College (now Christ Church), Oxford, was to be the principal contribution. Wolsey also proposed the establishment of more diocesan bishoprics for the better discipline of the Church. A good part of this humanistic reform program was eventually taken over by and carried out by Henry VIII after Wolsey's fall in 1529.

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[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-116.

It is still difficult to determine whether or not Wolsey himself really hoped to get or even wanted to become pope; or whether Henry VIII was really the driving force behind the attempts to secure this office for his first minister. But whichever was the case it is clear that Wolsey's ambitious program for the reformation of the English clergy failed in large part because of his other ambitious schemes and his egocentric antagonization of both the clergy and the laity. It seems certain that he was more interested in the legatine powers of reformation than in the proposed reformation itself. Although it is obvious that for a reformation to begin at the top by the papal legate, Wolsey would have to start by obtaining his special legatine powers; it is noteworthy that he was far more successful in wheedling by various schemes the necessary powers out of the papacy to bring about reform than he was in the actual effecting of the promised reformation. He was also far more intent on asserting that the entire power to effect ecclesiastical reform belonged to himself alone as the papal legate rather than to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the provincial Convocations, and universities, than he was on carrying out the reformation itself. This is shown by the fact that the very first use that he made of his independent legatine commission was in his capacity as Lord Chancellor to threaten Archbishop Warham of Canterbury, the Primate of England, with prosecution under the statute of *Praemunire* because he, instead of Wolsey, had summoned the Convocation of his province in order to consider its reformation. The extraordinary reason he gave for doing this appears to have been that he considered Warham's statement that he had received the King's consent for the summons was untrue. He obviously considered the Archbishop of Canterbury not as a colleague in the necessary work of Church reform but rather as an obstacle to the absolutism of his legatine authority from the pope. In fact Wolsey until his fall continually hoped to become Archbishop of Canterbury himself as well as of York, and he resented Warham's length of life as a personal grievance.

It seems clear, then, that Wolsey's conservative ideas of reformation which Colet and Fox believed would amount to something in 1518 and 1519, soon became subordinated to his greed for power. It is certain that the meaning of the Roman ecclesiastical jurisdiction, unpopular though this had been in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, had never been brought home to Englishmen so effectively and strongly as it was in the person and the actions of Wolsey as Cardinal legate a latere. His enormous power derived from the fact that since Henry VIII did not like to give concentrated attention to business, Wolsey, who had an enormous capacity for administrative work, was able to combine what was in practice the power of a vice-pope for England in the Church with the supreme power below the King in the State as Lord Chancellor. Henry could not help but notice the dual source of Wolsey's power since Wolsey had centered all the traditional ecclesiastical liberties in his own hands. But in reality all his enormous power in the Church as well as the State depended upon the King; since it was to please Henry VIII that successive popes had agreed to the extensions of Wolsey's legatine powers. Similarly his temporal power as Lord Chancellor depended entirely on the King. The fact that Wolsey at once submitted meekly to the charge of Praemunire brought against him in late 1529 by Henry (because of the failure of both his pro-French policy and also in the related matter of the King's suit for marriage annulment at the Court of Rome) showed that all of the Cardinal's great powers really depended on those of the King. It was no chance that very soon after Wolsey's fall Henry, with the help of Thomas Cromwell, decided to force the submission of the ecclesia Anglicana to the national government in the same way that Wolsey had been previously forced to submit; that is through the threat of being charged under the statute of Praemunire. There is no question that the great unpopularity of Wolsey by the end of his period of rule, together with his failure to bring about his promised reform of the Church, had by 1529 made both the papal jurisdiction and the clergy as a body sufficiently unpopular in England so that Henry VIII and his minister had little difficulty in gaining the support of the lay lords and Commons to assist him in carrying out the series of parliamentary enactments which broke the ecclesia Anglicana off from the papal jurisdiction and the Catholic Church.

Continental European scholarship has been aware for some time of the importance for the religious history of the sixteenth century of the international humanist movement and its dedication to the idea of reform of both the Universal Church and the societas Christiana. This movement has generally been termed Erasmianism. However, James McConica has recently noted that

> the professional study of the English Reformation has been almost untouched by these developments [in continental scholarship], despite the work of scholars in showing the European ramifications of the pre-reform movement. Yet it is clear that this movement did much to prepare the intellectual milieu of Reformation controversy; and that disciples of this creed of humanism and reform could be found everywhere. The sponsors of the movement were the northern humanists themselves, along with aristocratic patrons of scholarship, bishops and cathedral clergy, professional servants of kings, and lawyers. The common tenets of the movement were generous and undogmatic, covering a wide range of temperament and inclination, from the practicality of a careerist administrator to the illuminism of a Valdés. Without leaving the broad tradition of medieval Christendom, these people dreamed of a simplification of doctrine and reform of practice; especially through the infusion of humanist values into the aridities of late fifteenth century controversy. Among the sponsors of the movement were Colet, More, and Fisher in England, Lefèvre D'Étaples and Marguerite of Navarre in France, the Cardinal reformer Ximénez de Cisneros in Spain, Sadoleto and Contarini in Italy, Wimpfeling and Pflug

> in Germany. In matters of Church reform their manifesto was the Libellus ad Leonem X presented to the Fifth Lateran Council [1512-1517] by Tomasso Giustiniani and Vincenzo Quirini, and in private counsels, the handbook was the Enchiridion militis Christiani of Erasmus. 37

It has been the purpose of this dissertation to examine in depth the life and thought of a single member of this international humanist movement for reform of the Church and Christian society and his contribution to the development of "Erasmianism." Our dissertation makes clear that the groundwork for Colet's ideal of humanistic reform was laid during the course of the fifteenth century by the development of humanism in England, especially at Oxford. We were unable here to make an examination in depth of the contributions to reformatory thought of the Italian humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries so far as this is known, although we hope to do this in the future. Our research has made quite evident that the result of using the tools of the studia humanitatis, especially in an attempt to bring about a contemporary repristination of the genuine structure of the primitive Church, would eventually have practical consequences in the person of a reforming humanist. For reasons that we were unable to discuss in detail the long desired and long expected reform of the Universal Church was continually thwarted by both the papacy and the secular princes of Europe during this period. The deepest cause for this seems to have been the continuing secularization of a changing

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37. J. K. McConica, English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI (Oxford, 1965), p. 2.

society in which the ancient idea of the Catholic or trans-national Church under the leadership of the Roman pontiff was losing its force after the frustrated hopes of two centuries. The growth of nationalism during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the predominantly political approach by both the upper clergy and laity to all ecclesiastical matters including reform, was an important aspect of this increasing secularization of society, which was ushering in what is generally called the modern period in European history.

Another aspect of the decline of the medieval Church and its culture was the failure of scholastic theology to renew itself by its own methods. We saw that Italian humanism and its methodology, derived from the revival of the ancient studia humanitatis, found increasing acceptance among the English university-educated clergy because of the cultural and religious failure of fifteenth century scholasticism. We were unfortunately unable because of lack of space and time to incorporate in this dissertation our detailed research into the exegetical method used in his theological writings by Colet. But we can say here that his exegetical method for reviving the "old and true" biblical theology was a return to the Bible and the ancient Church Fathers in theology in the same way that earlier humanists had striven to bring about a renaissance of other aspects of culture by use of the methods of the studia humanitatis. On his return from Italy and France Colet applied these methods to the Bible as the original source of Christian revelation and rejected and intentionally attacked the still ascendant but now artificial scholastic exegesis. Colet was clearly not the first to apply the methods of Renaissance humanism to the Bible. We saw that Valla, Manetti, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and probably others, had gone before him in this regard. Nor was there a "revolutionary technique" in Colet's exegetical method as P. Albert Duhamel and Sears Jayne maintain, except in the sense that his was a determined application of humanism to biblical exegesis, theology, and preaching. Except in this regard Colet's exegesis is in fact a return to the tradition of literal and spiritual exegesis of the Bible which had been characteristic of the hermeneutics of the Church Fathers and the earlier Middle Ages. According to this the Holy Spirit inspires and speaks through the entire canonical Scriptures. At times His meaning is the same as that of the human author of the part of the Scripture in question, in which case the literal or obvious sense and the spiritual sense are one and the same. But there are certain obscure or unedifying passages in Scripture in which the Spirit's meaning is obscure. In these the spiritual sense is different from the literal meaning of the passage which is that of the human author. But it never contradicts it. In such cases the spiritual or mystical meaning intended by the Holy Spirit as the divine author can only be understood by mystical or spiritual contemplation of the text. This difference is often the case in the Old Testament, according to Colet. But in the New Testament writings

> except when it pleased the Lord Jesus and the Apostles to speak in parables . . . all the rest of the discourse, in which either the Saviour teaches his disciples more openly or the Apostles instruct the Churches, has the meaning which appears on the surface; nor is one thing said and another meant, but the same

> thing is meant which is said and the meaning is wholly literal . . . Conclude from this that where the literal sense is, the allegorical meaning is not always also there; but . . . where there is an allegorical meaning, the literal sense always underlies it.[38]

Since Colet's surviving exegesis deals almost entirely with the New Testament, he usually treats the literal and spiritual senses as one and the same. However, he holds that "the sense of Holy Scripture is entirely spiritual."[39] Colet's exegetical method was thus a combination of the application of the methods of the humanities to the Bible and a return to simpler patristic and early medieval tradition of the spiritual or mystical exegesis of the Bible.

Colet's determined return to the ancient traditions of exegesis in his attempt to bring about a renaissance of what Erasmus called "the old and true theology" was the result of a stronger theological tradition and stronger devotional piety than was the case with his humanist forebears in Italy. His humanism, like that of the Italians, had as its ideal the revival of the "pure" primary sources of the past; but in his case the primary source was that of Christian revelation, the Bible. Colet's revival of biblical study between 1496 and 1503, which would later be improved upon by his friend Erasmus, would also help sow the seeds of the Protestant Reformation. For unlike his Italian predecessors in the application of humanist methods to the Bible, and despite his own background in both Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy, Colet came to believe that all aspects of paganism, and especially all "heathen philosophy" must be rigorously excluded from Christian theology. In this respect he was a forerunner of Luther's attack on the use of Aristotle in theology and stood in the same tradition of late medieval devotional piety.[40]

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[38] *In Eccl. Hier.*, c. 5, tr. Lupton, pp. 106-107.

[39] *Ibid.*, c. 1, tr. Lupton, p. 48; cf. also his reply to Erasmus in which he maintains a single as opposed to Erasmus' double literal sense in their dispute concerning *de tedio Iesu*. Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, V, cols. 1291-1294.

So far as we know Colet was the first of the European humanists to apply his humane knowledge to the historical context of the Bible and to reject almost totally the scholastic method in theology. At the end of his life Ficino was moving in this direction; but because of his variegated interests his surviving lectures on the Epistle to the Romans are of a quite different nature from the Pauline expositions of Colet, which were probably influenced by them. Colet seems also to have been the first Renaissance figure to preach the "pure source of the Gospel" to the laity, based upon his New Testament expositions. He did this in a manner which would later become characteristic of the Protestant Reformation.

We therefore see Colet as an important transitional figure in the application of the methods of Renaissance humanism to Christian truths and the attempt by historical methods to understand and to revive the traditions of the original Apostolic Church. This would soon lead to the historical controversy between Reformation Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as to whether the papal and episcopal Church of the late Middle Ages truly represented the primitive Church of the Apostles of the Risen Christ as this is described in the New Testament. This problem has not yet been resolved. Colet's most important contribution to biblical scholarship just before the Reformation was undoubtedly the important part which he played in 1499 in inspiring Erasmus to devote his own interest in "the more humane literature" primarily to the vetus theologia of the Bible and the Fathers, in the same way in which Colet himself had begun to do in about 1492 when he left England for France and Italy. Erasmus' much greater appreciation of the importance of philology than that of Colet eventually resulted in 1516 in the first of his critical editions of the Greek New Testament, together with a new "more Latin" translation than that of the Vulgate. It also resulted in his successive critical editions of the Church Fathers, the earliest commentators on the Bible and witnesses to the structure of the early Church. For although Erasmus' edition does not stand up well by the standards of modern biblical scholarship, it was in fact the first critical edition of the New Testament to appear from the press, although the Complutensian Polyglot of Alcala had been begun earlier under the auspices of Cardinal Ximénes de Cisneros. We are unable at this time to examine the influence of Erasmus on Luther and the origins of Protestantism; but it seem probable that the development of the biblical theology of Luther, as well as that of Zwingli and Calvin, would not have been possible without the prior work of Erasmus. Luther studied the works of Erasmus intensively between 1515 and 1521 and he made use of the Novum Instrumentum when it appeared during the course of his important lectures on Romans of 1515-16. It seems to us probable that Luther was also significantly influenced by Erasmus' Annotationes or commentaries on the New Testament. Like that of Colet, Erasmus, and Lefèvre D'Étaples, Luther's thought was strongly influenced by the Pauline theology.

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[40] " . . . . he told me that among the Italians he had discovered some monks of true wisdom and piety . . . He also often praised certain Germans among whom, he said, there even yet lingered some traces of the primitive religion." Allen IV, ep. 1211, p. 521, lines 451-56; Olin, p. 184.

However, despite his indirect influence in the development of the Reformation through his determination to revive the original Gospel preaching of the Apostolic Church, Colet sought for a basically Catholic type of Church reform. By this we mean that he believed as whole-heartedly as his friend Erasmus in the supreme importance of the unity and concord of the Universal or Catholic Church as the undivided corpus mysticum of Christ on earth. Both Colet and Erasmus would maintain also the basic importance of that unity in the face of schism, despite their recognition that the deformity of the Church of their own day resulted from abuses which were directly connected with the traditional structure of the medieval Church. Colet clearly stands in the conservative tradition of conciliar reform under papal and episcopal leadership in accordance with the due order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This ideal of reform through frequent Church councils under the leadership of the prelates is based by Colet to a large degree in the thought of the Pseudo-Dionysius. But it was also the ideal of other humanistically inclined reformers in the early sixteenth century: Richard Fox, John Fisher, Cuthbert Tunstall, Thomas More and Erasmus. We have already seen why the English Church of the early sixteenth century was basically papalist in its sympathies. Colet's commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy shows why he too believed in the traditional hierarchical conception of the Church, despite his scathing criticism of contemporary holders of the most exalted offices of the clerical hierarchy.

Colet's greatest single attempt to bring about ecclesiastical reform was unquestionably his sermon opening Canterbury Convocation in February 6, 1511/1512. But his courageous, plain spoken, and idealistic call for reform had very little effect on the prelates to whom he appealed. This fact is to be attributed primarily to the great changes which had taken place in the whole of European society since the period of that early Church which Colet took as his ideal for reform. The antagonism between the English clergy and the laity which had been developing since the late fourteenth century came to a head at about this same time in the Hunne Affair. Bishop Fitzjames' handling of this in the Parliament of 1515-16 caused lay anticlericalism to reach such a pitch that it required a special appeal to Henry VIII by Wolsey to quiet the laity and preserve the traditional rights and liberties of the Church. Fox's letter to Wolsey of January 2, 1519 makes abundantly clear that Henry and the lay nobility were not placated. A great deal was therefore expected of Wolsey's proposed reformation of the entire English clergy by means of his special legatine powers. He told Wolsey that for the clerical hierarchy to regain the respect of the laity a genuine reformation of the Church would be necessary despite the tremendous difficulties of dealing with traditional vested interests.

This was also precisely Colet's view of reform. He, like Bishop Fox, was a conservative humanist reformer who although as a patriotic Englishman was concerned with the reform of the national Church, had much the same ideals of Catholic reform as his friends Erasmus and More.

Our study of Colet's theology and his influence on Erasmus have led us to see the great importance for the religious history of the sixteenth century of the application of the humanistic methods to theology during the preceding period. For the renaissance of the "old and true theology" of the Bible and the Fathers would lead to differing understandings of the meaning of the Christian Gospel and the nature of the Church. This would especially derive from the study of the thought of Saints Paul and Augustine. It also raised the problem of the meaning of early Christian ideas for the reform of the contemporary Church. Another factor of supreme importance for the Reformation controversy was the question of the respective roles of Scripture and the apostolic tradition in the interpretation of Christian revelation, and their correct relationship to each other. Colet, following Pico della Mirandola, was strongly influenced by the idea originally derived from the Pseudo-Dionysius of a secret oral tradition which was delivered by Christ to the Apostles, in addition to His revelation of the divine will which is written down in the Scriptures. This argument, drawn principally from Dionysius, was believed by Colet to give almost apostolic authority for all the traditional institutions and ceremonies of the Catholic Church which did not have their foundation in Scripture. Colet believed that this oral tradition was written down in his old age by Paul's disciple Dionysius, and is therefore to be found in the corpus Dionysiacum. But Colet maintains that this oral tradition must always be firmly founded upon the basic Scriptural revelation of the Gospel; so that the two sources of revelation, Scripture and tradition are never separate. In this respect he was a forerunner of the Anglican interpretation of the correct relationship between Scripture and apostolic tradition as basically the same source of Christian revelation. This interpretation, although maintained by certain Fathers of the Council of Trent, would be lost in the post-Tridentine interpretation of the "two sources of revelation" until the nineteenth century.

Our study of Colet has helped clarify the situation in English theology just before the beginning of the Reformation. Through his influence upon Erasmus, Colet made a significant contribution to the origins of the Erasmian movement which would play so great a role in the English Reformation and the theological tradition of the Church of England. In his attempt to return to the "old and true" biblical theology behind a decadent scholasticism, Colet applied the contemporary ideal of a renaissance of ancient culture specifically to theology. His was the ancient ideal of a re-formation of the individual Christian and the whole Church as nearly as possible to what he considered to be its Apostolic structure and "pristine purity," in the imitation of Christ and God. In his preaching the Gospel to the laity from the New Testament Colet, like Erasmus, almost certainly influenced men who would later be England's earliest Protestants. But there is no doubt whatever that he himself strove for a renewal of the concord of the Universal Church under the traditional hierarchy of the Pope and the bishops; and his extant writings make clear that he could not have accepted the principles of the Henrician Schism. Had he lived, we believe Colet would have died for his beliefs, like his fellow Catholic reformers, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More.

Appendix I

ERASMUS' LIFE OF COLET IN HIS LETTER TO JUSTUS JONAS
OF JUNE 13, 1521

In his important letter written to Jodocus (or Justus) Jonas from Anderlecht on June 15, 1521, Erasmus gave a short but remarkably full and compact pen-portrait of his dead friend, John Colet. This was the first and the basic *Life* of Colet, since all later biographies and interpretations are based on information in this letter. In its final form the letter was addressed to Jonas, an Erfurt humanist and admirer of Erasmus who had accompanied Luther to the Diet of Worms in 1521. However, Erasmus' correspondence makes clear that he had been preparing the biography from the time that he first learnt of Colet's death soon after it occurred on September 16, 1519.

In opposition to Eugene F. Rice's view of this biography,[1] we will show that Erasmus took great pains to make his portrait of Colet as accurate and complete as he possibly could, when it is considered that the Dutch scholar was out of England during the entire period of its composition between 1519 and 1521. Because of this, Erasmus was forced to write his biography from his own memory and from such information as he could gather from Colet's friends and former house-pupils in England. He began this task as soon as he learnt of Colet's death in the autumn of 1519. On October 17 of that year he told John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, "I have written this [letter to you] grieving for Colet's death, a death so bitter to me that the loss of no one in the last thirty years has affected me more. . . . For my own sake I grieve for so constant a friend and so matchless a patron. It only remains for me to discharge this duty in the place of funeral obsequies: that if my writings are of any avail, I will not allow the memory of such a man to die out among our posterity."[2] He wrote about Colet in similar terms to other members of the international humanist movement including Paul Voltz, Abbot of Hugshofen, Richard Pace, Colet's successor as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Lord Mountjoy, Guillaume Budé, and others. To Colet's former house-pupils, Thomas Lupset and William Dancaster, of whom the latter had been living with the Dean at the time of his death and the former had been financed by Colet at Cambridge where he had studied with Erasmus, the Dutch scholar wrote pressingly for the fullest possible information about the Dean so that he could redeem the promise that he had made to the Bishop of Rochester. He wrote to Dancaster on October 16, 1519: "I will write [Colet's] Life, if you and others like yourself will first give me information on such points as may be unknown to me. I earnestly request you to do so."[3] That the biography in the letter to Jonas was not even more complete seems in fact to have been owing to the remissness of Erasmus' English correspondents. Thus in a letter written to Lupset from Bruges on August 23, 1521, just eight days before the biographical letter to Jonas was published in the collection of his letters entitled Epistolae D. Erasmi Roterodami ad diuersos,[4] Erasmus wrote: "I have completed the Life of our Colet within the compass of a letter. If it is thought to be not very graphically portrayed, the fault will/in part be laid to you for not having fully provided me with those embellishments [of the portrait] which none could have done better than yourself."[5] Since the Epistolae ad diuersos could be expected to be read by Colet's English friends to whom Erasmus had in 1521 been announcing the project over a period of two years, and since Erasmus also looked upon the biography as the equivalent of a final obsequy for his dead friend, it is practically impossible that he cast the portrait of Colet in his own image as Professor Rice asserts. Besides this, Erasmus' biography is in complete agreement -- with the sole exception of one possible ambiguity which we shall discuss below -- with everything we know about Colet from other sources, including Erasmus' own writings. In the course of our research it has become evident that Erasmus' account is indispensable for a complete understanding of Colet. For if it is read carefully in the original Latin it throws the necessary light on the meaning of his theological writings and allows us to reconstruct his intellectual development. We have therefore quoted passages from the biography in the course of our description of Colet's career and in this way demonstrated its substantial accuracy.

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[1] According to Rice, the "myth" of Colet's humanism "dates from 1521, and its source is Erasmus' sophisticated biographical letter to Jodocus Jonas. An unconscious reluctance to recognize and accept basic doctrinal cleavages and [Erasmus'] particular effort in 1521 to dissociate himself publicly but subtly from Luther's Augustinianism make this first Life little more than a crystallization of Erasmus' own religious attitudes. Colet emerges [in this letter] a typical Erasmian . . . a 'primitive' theologian living, preaching, and teaching the *philosophia Christi* from the purest fountains of the Gospel. The portrait is elegant, persuasive, and misleading." In a footnote Rice goes on to state that this letter presents Colet as "the 'liberal' theologian and humanist created by Erasmus. . . " Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "John Colet and the Annihilation of the Natural," *Harvard Theological Review*, *45* (1952), p. 142 and note 4.

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[2] Allen, IV, ep. 1030, p. 94. Cf. Lupton, Life, p. 233.

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[3] Allen, IV, ep. 1027, pp. 89-90. Cf. Lupton, op. cit., p. 234.

[4] The Epistolae D. Erasmi Roterodami ad diuersos et aliquot aliorum ad illum, per amicos eruditos ex ingentibus fasciculis schedarum collectae was published by Johann Froben at Basel on August 31, 1521. Cf. Allen, I, p. 600. The title of this collection of Erasmus' letters is abbreviated by Allen to Epistolae ad diuersos.

[5] Allen, IV, ep. 1229, p. 569. Part of this letter is translated by Lupton in his Life of Colet, p. 234, where he wrongly dates it September 1, 1521. It is in this letter that Erasmus tells Lupset that Colet "imparted the true philosophy of Christ drawn from the purest sources of the Gospels and imparted it to the lay people," and not in the letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521, as Rice states. Lupset knew Colet intimately and, as we have seen, Erasmus depended on him for material for his Life. He clearly could not expect to deceive Lupset, or Fisher or Pace, with a misleading Life of Colet. Pace has left an appreciation of Colet in his De fructu qui ex doctrina percipitur. Erasmus' letter to Lupset of August 21, 1521, was also published in the Epistolae ad diuersos of August 31.

But in order to lay to rest the attacks upon the authenticity of Erasmus' biography, we shall discuss the famous ambiguity or crux in the letter to Jonas which has puzzled Colet's interpreters, resulting in a wide effect on both Colet interpretation and belief in the general reliability of Erasmus. In the passage in the letter which is basic to an understanding of Colet's education, Erasmus wrote that following his early education in the liberal arts in England, Colet visited both France and Italy.

> While there, he devoted himself entirely to the study of the sacred writers. He had previously, however, roamed with great zest through literature of every kind, finding most pleasure in the early writers, Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome. And among the old writers there was none to whom he was more unfair than Augustine.6

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6. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, lines 270-273. The crucial sentence occurs in line 273: "Atque inter veteres nulli erat iniquior quam Augustino."

"Atque inter veteres nulli erat iniquior quam Augustino." Interpreters such as Samuel Knight, J. G. Nichols and at first J. H. Lupton, thought that "iniquior," the key word in this sentence, should be translated "biased toward" in the sense of "favorably biased toward." They were supported in this by the fact that Colet cites Augustine six times in his works, including A ryght fruitfull monicion concernynge the order of a good christen mannes lyfe which evidently dates from a late period in his career. Since Colet also cites Augustine with especial approval in his early enarratio on Romans, there is no ground in his own writings for positing any change of his opinion with regard to Augustine. However, Lupton later pointed out that Erasmus uses the same phrase, "iniquior quam" in the same letter to Jonas in a clearly pejorative sense. This crucial sentence must therefore be translated: "And among the old [theological] writers there was none to whom [Colet] was more unfair than Augustine."[7] How is this to be reconciled with the fact that there is in fact no sign in any of Colet's extant writings that he was "unfair to" Augustine in any way? In the enarratio on Romans, Colet followed Augustine's interpretation closely, and cites him as his authority at a key theological point when he identifies the highest virtue of caritas with the indwelling Holy Spirit. Frederic Seebohm and Ernst Cassirer[8] thought that Erasmus must mean that Colet disagreed with the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, but our examination of his treatment of predestination in his commentary on chapters 9 and 10 of Romans shows that this is not the case. It is, however, just possible that Colet might be termed unfair in his interpretation of Augustine because of the importance of this Father for the development of the scholastic theologies of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus to which Erasmus tells us Colet was strongly opposed.[9] But if this is the case, we must repeat that there is no direct evidence whatever of the fact in Colet's own writings.

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[7] Cf. Lupton, Lives of Vitrier and Colet, p. 21; and Life of Colet, p. 7, note 1; and Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 515, note to line 273.

[8] Cf. E. Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, tr. J. P. Pettegrove (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1953), pp. 105-106, and Seebohm, op. cit., infra.

It is our contention that the probable solution to this problem is that Erasmus was being intentionally ambiguous on this very important point in his letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521. If we are correct, it is not surprising that Colet's interpreters have had continual difficulty with this key sentence. It is important to note that the original context of this sentence is such that we are led to expect a climatic sentence which states Colet's especial approval of Augustine rather than the contrary. We believe that light is thrown upon this by a close consideration of the circumstances in which this letter to Jonas was written.

Justus Jonas, a humanist professor at the University of Erfurt, had accompanied Luther to Worms in April 1521 when the Wittenburg Reformer had appeared before the imperial Diet to answer charges of heresy in his writings. By May of this same year Jonas was a more or less committed disciple of Luther. Erasmus had been in correspondence with Jonas since 1519, and on May 10, 1521, a few weeks after Luther's appearance before the Diet and about a month before his later letter of June 13, Erasmus had written Jonas a letter in which he stated his criticisms of Luther in an obvious attempt to prevent Jonas from going over completely to the Lutheran camp.[10] The final papal bull had been pronounced against Luther in January 1521, and by April Charles V had authorized the bull's publication and Luther had been placed under the ban of the Empire. This event had a strong effect upon Erasmus since Luther was now formally condemned as a heretic by the Church. The attitude to Luther in his letter of Jonas of May 10, 1521, is considerably changed from that of the twenty-two Axiomata favorable to Luther which he had drawn up at the request of the Elector Frederick of Saxony on November 5, 1520. The letter of May 10 castigates Luther's immoderation and warns of the danger which he poses for both the peace of the Church and the progress of what Erasmus considered to be true reform.

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[9] Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, p. 520, lines 419-444.

Erasmus' letter of May 10, 1521, on Luther had no appreciable effect on Justus Jonas. By June 1521, he had left the University of Erfurt to take up permanent residence at Wittenberg and become Professor of Theology at the University there. He now became, along with Philip Melanchthon, one of Luther's closest associates at Wittenburg.[11]

Finding that his letter of May 10 had had no effect on Jonas, Erasmus decided to include the Life of Colet upon which he had been working for two years in the form of another letter to Jonas, along with that of another Catholic humanist reformer who had also strongly influenced Erasmus' early career, the French Franciscan Jehan Vitrier. This was the letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521. This letter continues by other means Erasmus' arguments against Luther and Jonas' adherence to his cause. The second letter, containing the Lives of Vitrier and Colet, is in fact the logical companion to the earlier one, and was also published by Froben in the Epistolae ad diuersos on September 1, 1521. This second letter continues Erasmus' argument that Jonas should avoid the extravagances of Luther and should instead imitate Colet and Vitrier by working like them for reform within the framework of the Catholic Church, decadent though it admittedly was. But whereas the letter of May 10 was a direct appeal against Luther, that of June 13 continues the same argument in an oblique but nevertheless very meaningful way. Erasmus now presents as model reformers for Jonas to follow, not Luther, but Vitrier and Colet who, as their biographies show, devoted themselves to evangelical renewal and reform within the Church, rather than in opposition to its traditional doctrines.[12] At both the opening and the close of the letter Erasmus makes quite clear that he is placing before Jonas (and also all readers of the Epistolae ad diuersos) the examples of two men whom he considered to be Catholic saints and reformers and "sincere Christians."[13]

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[10] This letter is in Allen, IV, ep. 1202, pp. 486-493.

[11] See J. C. Olin, ed., Erasmus: Christian Humanism and the Reformation, p. 150.

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[12] Erasmus certainly does not present to Jonas a "liberal Colet" as Eugene Rice maintains, Nor does his account of Colet's brave sermon before Henry VIII of Good Friday, 1513, by which he placed himself in very real danger, present us with a Colet cast in Erasmus' image, as he also holds. Cf. Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[13] Cf. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 526-527, lines 617-635.

Thus the letter of June 13, 1521, begins with the following words:

> To Jodocus Jonas of Erfurt . . . .
>
> With your earnest request, my worthy friend, that I would briefly portray for you, as in miniature, the life of John Colet, I will gladly reply; especially since I have the impression that you are trying to find some outstanding example of piety by which to regulate your own course of life. I have, most beloved Jonas, been acquainted with many people whose high principles I greatly esteemed; but I must say that I have never yet seen any one in whose character [moribus] I did not finally miss some aspect of Christian piety, when he is compared with the sincerity of the two I am about to describe. 14

At the end of this long letter, having given Jonas the additional *Life* of Vitrier as well as that of Colet for which he had asked, Erasmus finished the letter with the following words:

> You now have, Jodocus, not finished portraits but outline sketches only -- all that the scanty limits of a letter allowed -- of two men of our age whom I consider to have been true and sincere Christians. It will be your task to select from each what you think most conducive to true religion. If you ask which of the two I prefer, I deem them worthy of equal praise considering that they lived in such different circumstances. On the one hand, it was a great thing for Colet, in secular circumstances such as his, to have steadily followed the call not of natural inclination but of Christ. On the other hand, the merit of Vitrier makes yet a fairer show in having attained, amid his [monastic] conditions of life, to as much of the Gospel Spirit as he displayed. . . . And if you will listen to me, Jonas, you will not hesitate to enroll these two in the catalogue of the saints, even though no Pope should ever canonize them.

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14. Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 507-508, lines 1-8. Lupton's translation is in Olin, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

> Happy souls! to whom I owe so much, aid by your prayers Erasmus still struggling in the miseries of this life, so that I may rejoin your society, never to be parted from you again.
>
> Fare well, my Jonas. If I have satisfied your wishes, I am glad; for I know I have been far from doing justice to my subjects. [15]

Erasmus was himself far more oriented toward Jerome, the biblical translator among the Latin Fathers, than to Augustine, who was Luther's favorite Father. We therefore consider it probable that in his attempt to prevent Jonas from going whole-heartedly over to Luther, Erasmus included in this letter an intentionally ambiguous statement with regard to Colet's attitude towards Augustine.

P. S. Allen, who has made the closest study of Erasmus' Latin of all modern scholars, maintained that the phrase "inter veteres, nulli erat *iniquior quam* Augustino" refers not so much to Colet's condemnation of Augustine as to an inadequate consideration of his theology. If this is Erasmus' meaning, it goes against the testimony of Colet's own extant writings. It may also be of significance that the same charge of being "iniquior Augustino" had already been brought against Erasmus"s own *Annotationes* on the New Testament by Martin Lypsius.[16] But we must say on Erasmus' behalf that, although there is no direct evidence of the fact in his writings which have come down to us, it appears probable that Colet would have disagreed with the extreme doctrine of predestination which Augustine develops in some of his writings, since the Bishop of Hippo differs from both St. Paul himself and also the general *consensus* of both the Latin and the Greek Fathers on this question.[17] According to Fernand Prat, Augustine's theological understanding of Romans 8:28-30 as referring to a predestination to glory in the future life instead of predestination to grace in this world is based upon a mistake in exegesis which derives from the special meanings which by the fourth century the words *praedestinatio* and *praedestinatus* had acquired in the Latin theological tradition. Augustine exacerbated this tradition by certain statements in his *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* of 394 and elsewhere in his writings.[18] However, we must repeat that there is no sign of any opposition to Augustine in Colet's extant writings and the crucial sentence in Erasmus' letter to Jonas is in any case ambiguous in its Latin context. Erasmus had just said that of all literature Colet especially loved (potissimum delectabatur), the early (sacred) writers, Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome. Instead of beginning with a "but" as one would expect the crucial sentence which follows starts with the word atque which in classical Latin can only mean "and" or "and especially." Erasmus therefore does not prepare the reader at all for the sudden negative judgment of Augustine which follows and he was too good a Latinist not to have been well aware of the fact. Since this sentence also fails to receive any support whatever from Colet's extant writings, it is our belief that Erasmus changed the wording of this sentence in some way before he sent it to Jonas and therefore before it was published with the Epistolae ad diuersos on August 31, 1521.

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[15] Allen, IV, ep. 1211, pp. 526-527, lines 617-635. Lupton's translation in Olin, p. 191.

[16] Allen IV, p. 515, note to line 273. (My italicization of *iniquior quam* above).

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[17] Cf. F. Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul*, trans. J. L. Stoddart, 2 vols. (London: Burns Oates, 1926), I, pp. 247-249; 443-445.

[18] Cf. Prat, I, pp. 450-451. Prat says that in his *Expositio ad Romanos*, lx and lxi (*PL*, XXXV, 2079), Augustine's interpretation of Rom. 8:28-30 is in open opposition both to Eph. 2:8 and also to all the other Fathers. Augustine himself finally retracted this interpretation and substituted the Catholic formula in his *Retractationes*, i, 23 (*PL*, XXXII, 621-22). Colet would probably have noticed these changes in the Augustinian interpretation, although there is no overt sign of this in his Oxford *Enarr. Rom.*, which includes his only surviving commentary on Rom. 8. But Colet places a strong stress upon the freedom of the will and the moral responsibility for human action and he would have been certainly opposed to those scholastic doctrines of predestination and reprobation which derive originally from certain statements of Augustine; especially since these also oppose the theology of Dionysius, the *consensus* of the Fathers, and *Ephes.* 2:8 (Colet accepted *Ephesians* as a Pauline Epistle). We may assume that Erasmus knew facts of this sort, so that they could conceivably be interpreted as being "biased against" Augustine. We also know from Erasmus that Colet showed himself

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emotionally intransigent in his dislike of what he called the "worldly philosophy" of Thomas Aquinas, so that it is possible that he was equally "unfair" in his dislike of the extreme Augustinian doctrine of predestination. We feel, nevertheless, that if this was the case (and we repeat that there is no sign of this in Colet's extant writings except that Colet always strives to follow the consensus of patristic interpretation and the Catholic tradition) Erasmus is still probably exaggerating Colet's "unfairness" to Augustine in his letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521, or at the least, not making himself sufficiently explicit. The key sentence (Allen, IV, p. 515, line 273) simply does not follow naturally in its context and appears as though it has been changed or tampered with in some way by Erasmus himself before the letter was sent to Jonas and later published.

But however we resolve this difficulty, it certainly does not follow that Rice is correct in maintaining that Erasmus' letter to Jonas of June 13, 1521, contains a basically unreliable biography of Colet. On the contrary, we have found that with the exception of this single apparently intentionally ambiguous sentence there is no reason whatsoever to question the accuracy of the rest of the letter. This fact has emerged clearly as our discussion has proceeded. We will conclude this appendix by repeating that Erasmus, who was always extremely solicitous of his reputation in the learned world, would hardly have published for the perusal of that world a basically inaccurate biography of a man whom he again and again told that same world was one of his best friends; and whom he maintained was one of the two most outstanding examples he had ever met of a preacher to the lay people of "the genuine philosophy of Christ drawn from the most pure sources of the Gospels."[19]

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[19] See Erasmus' important letter of August 23, 1521, to Colet's former house-pupil Thomas Lupset which was also published in the Epistolae ad diuersos: "In [Coleto] praecipuum erat, quod synceram Christi philosophiam e purissimis Euangeliorum haustam fontibus gratis impartiit populo . . . " Allen, IV, ep. 1229, p. 569, lines 9-11.

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